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Also Nicholas Lemann and Gregg Easterbrook

The Washington Monthly

DECEMBER 1987/$3.00

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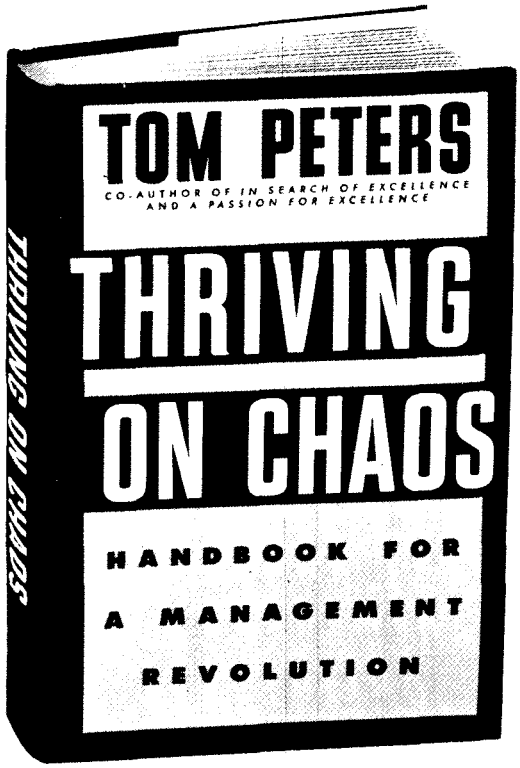

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LETTERS

Fat and proud

Charles Peters laments a Hardee's commercial that depicts a burger-munching child discussing her plans to attend an Ivy League college ["Tilting at Windmills," September]. The commercial, Peters says, fed his "suspicion that we are fast becoming a nation of snobs."

I write the *Monthly* to point out that you are afflicted by, and have been spreading, one of the most common and least becoming of Yuppie snobberies—body pride.

I am referring to your recent cover that advertised Steven Waldman's article, "The Best and Worst of American Unions" [July/August]. Illustrating the subject, you showed two cartoon workers side by side: one alert, clear-eyed, energetic, and slim; the other lazy, stupid—and fat.

In another era, articles about "undesirable" workers might have featured shiftless-looking blacks, bubble-headed women, unreliable-looking Hispanics, or subversive-looking Jews. These groups have quite rightly demanded that they should no longer be used as editors' stereotypes. Is there no one at the *Monthly* who realizes that fat people have feelings too, and that those feelings deserve respect?

Chronic obesity is a medical condition the origins of which doctors do not fully understand and are unable to cure. Overweightness is caused by hereditary and societal factors, but it is not caused by moral or intellectual failings. No one is entitled to assume that a fat person is stupid, lazy, or undisciplined.

The *Monthly* pretends to scorn this sort of narcissism. It is disappointing that you resort to it when it fits your own prejudices.

GARRETT EPPS
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The editor replies:

As one who definitely is not underweight, I find myself in complete agreement with Mr. Epps.

Wimps of a kind

The Washington Monthly has been and remains one of my favorite magazines. And so I was a bit thrown to see, on page 19 of your October issue, a caricature of George Shultz as the Cowardly Lion ["George Shultz, Wimp," Robert Goolrick]. As far as I know, the Shultz-Cowardly Lion analogy had been made previously in only one place—the "Separated at Birth" section of the April 1987 *Spy* magazine.

KURT ANDERSEN
New York, New York

Mr. Andersen is co-editor of Spy *magazine.*

The editor replies:

And as an admirer of *Spy*, I should have known.

Flak attack

The Washington Monthly's analysis of *The Washington Times* ["Moonie Journalism," Tom McNichol, October] was flawed by a susceptibility for the sensational and the incomplete.

First, the headline said "Moonie" journalism. While guaranteed to attract attention, the word is used as a pejorative, not unlike similar pejoratives historically applied to blacks and those of various other ethnic origins. Such characterizations are unfortunate and hinder rational discussion.

Second, the article minimized the fact that the newspaper is operated by a for-profit corporation. That means we must be (and are) legally an equal opportunity employer. Given the diversity of our staff, the newspaper consequently could never become dominated by *any* personal perspective.

Third, there was an extensive discussion about the newspaper's viability. Yet, in that discussion, pertinent facts were omitted, such as *The Washington Times*'s rapid circulation growth. It would provide valuable perspective if the author had examined the many years it took other major newspapers to achieve profitability.

It is unfortunate. These flaws detracted from the otherwise interesting and thoughtful analysis.

LARRY D. CHANDLER
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chandler is director of corporate public relations at The Washington Times.

While I am pleased to have my column appear in the Commentary section of *The Washington Times*, I'm not a staff member as McNichol wrote. The column has been nationally syndicated through my own company since June.

LAWRENCE WADE
Germantown, Maryland

I have come to expect better from both Tom McNichol and *The Washington Monthly* than your story on *The Washington Times*. Granted, the *Times* has scooped, or shut out, bigger news organizations on a number of stories. It seems that such scoops are often the result of the same type of "advocacy journalism" that conservatives revile when it's practiced by nonconservatives. In fact, the *Times* keeps such close company with the far right-wingers now in power that it seems to be Ronald Reagan's own *Pravda*.

On the eve of last spring's Washington protest march on Central American issues, a *Times* front-page headline asserted that the march was inspired and funded directly by Moscow, Managua, and Havana. The story beneath that headline offered nothing for the reader who prefers such alarming news to be substantiated. A few weeks later, the paper's "Inside the Beltway" column alerted Washington's far right to Jane Fonda's imminent run for the presidency. Again, no substantiation ensued.

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The *Times* occasionally practices good, pioneering journalism. The bottom line remains, however, that its ownership and objectivity are thoroughly tainted, and the paper's tone is more appropriate for folding-table displays in airport lobbies than for praise in an esteemed magazine. Most distressingly, McNichol implicitly endorses the growing mythology that the mainstream U.S. press is afflicted by "liberal bias."

PETER DYKSTRA
Alexandria, Virginia

Presidential bellboy

Boy, are you wrong, Mr. Glastris!

In your article in the October issue ["The Powers That Shouldn't Be"], you rather presumptuously advise the next Democratic president that he (or she) "shouldn't hire Anne Wexler." I feel that Anne Wexler should be one of the new president's *first* hires in 1989.

I have worked with Anne Wexler in political campaigns (issues and strategy), while she was serving in government, and in various capacities in the private sector. She has qualities and skills that the new president needs and should want.

Your suggestion that she is somehow a "tool" of corporate America is preposterous. It is odd that you castigate Anne Wexler for a business association with Robert Strauss and Charles Manatt. They hardly make an antipopulist trio. Your admission that Anne Wexler's "heart is in the right place" is an understatement. No one has given more to, or been more effective for, the "good guys" and the "good issues."

Just because one represents a client in a fiduciary capacity does not mean that one would necessarily champion that client's views when in government. If every Washington "insider" were screened from office because of the views of his or her clients, virtually no successful D.C. lawyer, lobbyist, or association officer would be eligible for your cabinet. (Maybe that is what you secretly hope.) Anne Wexler and her firm have *rejected* many a client because of the client's position on an issue.

Anne Wexler is a generous, compassionate, experienced, balanced, intelligent, mature, and loyal human being. What more can I say? What more could a president want! You would be lucky to carry her bags, Mr. Glastris.

ROBERT B. BARNETT
Washington, D.C.

Paul Glastris replies:

Ms. Wexler is a generous and capable person. It's to her credit that she has fought some noble battles and rejected some unsavory clients. But, as I said, her "business association" with those two great populists, Mr. Strauss and Mr. Manatt, involved promoting a potential $37 billion consumer rip-off sponsored by a consortium of energy companies. That she was paid for her efforts doesn't exactly dismiss the matter. Worse, she has gladly helped Republicans and cor-

The Washington Monthly

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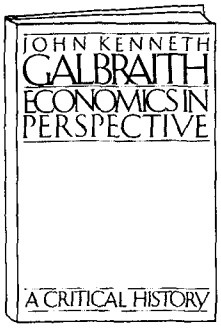
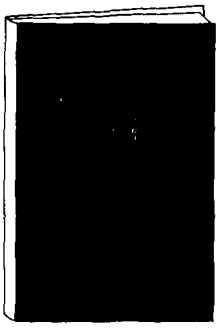


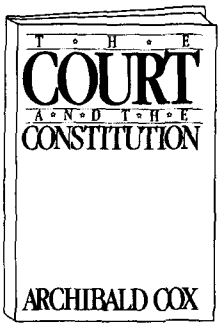
ECONOMICS IN PERSPECTIVE
A Critical History
John Kenneth Galbraith

In his most wide-ranging book, Galbraith demonstrates how, throughout history, economic thought and theory have been shaped and molded by the times. "The title . . . is tonic all by itself. Anyone can tell us what the prevailing economic issues of the day are. . . . But to see these matters in perspective? For that we may need the likes of Professor John Kenneth Galbraith."—Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, *New York Times.*



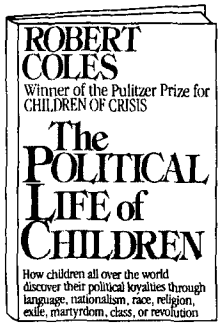
IN THE JAWS OF HISTORY
Bui Diem with David Chanoff

"Diem has written the most extraordinary *tour d'horizon* of the Vietnam War I have ever read, a document all the more remarkable for its absence of bitterness."—Tom Dowling, *San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner.* "The first comprehensive book by a leading Vietnamese participant."—Stanley Karnow, author of *Vietnam: A History.* "Here is the book we have been waiting for. . . ."–Keyes Beech, Pulitzer Prize–winning Far East correspondent.



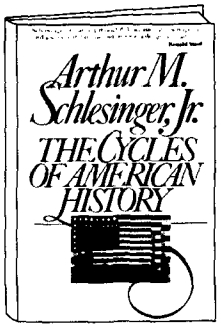
THE COURT AND THE CONSTITUTION
Archibald Cox

"Gentlemanly in its disagreements, judicious in its findings, this is a learned and lively inquiry into the genius of American constitutionalism by one who has himself played (as the Watergate Special Prosecutor) a historic role in its continuingly dramatic unfolding."—Kirkus Reviews.



THE POLITICAL LIFE OF CHILDREN
Robert Coles

"That children have a political life at all is a surprise to many adults. . . . What Coles and his wife and sons and associates began to discover . . . is that in many instances children are not simply parroting the cant of their elders but struggling with their own political concepts in the midst of influences that affect their lifes. A reading of *The Political Life of Children* should cure any adult of a sentimental view of childhood."—Katherine Paterson, *Washington Post Book World.*



THE CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

"*The Cycles of American History* embraces broad interpretations of the American culture, the role of moral absolutes in history, the nature of the Cold War, and the vicissitudes of the American Presidency. All are distinguished by erudition, critical acumen, magisterial judgements, and a felicitious and ever lively style."—Henry Steele Commager. Now in paperback.

SOUPSONGS AND WEBSTER'S ARK
Roy Blount, Jr.

And finally, *Atlantic* readers need no introduction to the merriment of Roy Blount, Jr. *Soupsongs* is just in time to stuff the stockings of all those literary types who are in bad need of a good giggle. "Roy Blount's stuff makes me laugh so hard, I sometimes have to go sit in a room and shut the door."—Garrison Keillor.

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porate PACs derail the campaign finance reform efforts of Senate Democrats. This does not inspire confidence in the vision she would bring to government.

Though becoming Ms. Wexler's bellhop doesn't strike me as a good career move, I confess to smiling a little at the notion of a Democratic cabinet without a single "successful D.C. lawyer, lobbyist, or association officer."

The joys of inertia

I was delighted to find my own experience with "permanent government" and its "inertial forces" confirmed in "Chalk One Up for the Permanent Government" [Rich Jaroslovsky, October].

While developing a suicide prevention project in a federal prison, I used to resent personnel moving on because it made it difficult to develop a consistent policy. After I had been away for some years and returned on a private assignment, I was pleased and a bit surprised to find that the suicide prevention project that had taken four years to establish was still in place—even though, and perhaps because, turnover had continued at its earlier clip.

THOMAS A. CAFFREY
New York, New York

Mighty profound

John Rothchild's article ["The Stock Analysts," October] is one of the best pieces of business writing I have ever seen. It really captures the essence of the securities analysis game. As a mutual fund manager, I'm in a position to see a lot of stock reports, and I must say that Mr. Rothchild knows his stuff. The article was a pleasure to read, and its clear style delivered some profound truths.

JEROME L. DODSON
San Francisco, California

Homer and Hawkeye

Jacob Weisberg's review ["Sex and Drugs and Heidegger," September] goes a long way towards describing what's essentially wrong with both our largely unfocused system of higher education and the largely reactionary critique of it by Allan Bloom. However, having attended both St. John's College, which Weisberg uses as an example of the ultimate ivory tower, and the University of Iowa, a typically massive midwestern public institution, the combined experience leads me to believe that his Ivy League experience has somewhat skewed his perspective.

Out here amongst the mega-institutions, the "relevance" movement of the late sixties and early seventies definitely occured. However, the flaky "Feminist Framework" type courses that Weisberg sees plaguing American universities are as much on the fringe here as the bread-and-butter type of philosophy, language, and mathematics courses that he would like to see more of.

The real story over the past 15 years at state universities has been the explosive growth of preprofesssional schools, due more to the democratization of the American university than to the influence of a relatively small group of radical students over a much briefer period of time. About 25 years ago the children of the newly prosperous middle class began flooding college campuses, possessing the notion that higher education was the key to more money and prestige, rather than a belief in higher education's inherent goodness.

The reaction to this trend by the University of Iowa has been to establish a massive array of general education requirements, ranging from public speaking to biology, that often makes up half of the undergraduate course work. This seems just as bad as the preprofessional credential mill.

What is good about St. John's is not the transcendent value of the Great Books but rather the genuine enthusiasm almost all of its students have for them. What is bad about St. John's students, as Weisberg accurately notes, is the extent to which many are uninterested in looking beyond the next Euclidean proof to think about the relationship of the program to their life's work and to contemporary society.

On the other hand, the biggest problem at Iowa is not lack of exposure to the great philosophers and artists of Western civilization. Instead, it is a kind of sleepy-eyed, cynical, do-what-you-have-to-to-get-by, pragmatic attitude that is reinforced by requirements in areas in which students have no natural interest and that are taught in over-crowded settings by inexperienced and often equally uninterested graduate teaching assistants.

What is needed is not more requirements or even a different focus. These imply a rigid, impersonal concept of things students need to be prepared for their career and for life. What is needed is a new contract between students and universities. Students should justify every course they take and every major they try in relation to an ongoing effort to recognize their talents and interests. Universities should make all relevant information on courses and faculty readily available and guarantee them classmates and teachers with at least as much interest in and understanding of a given subject as they have.

All that can be effectively asked of the great mass of American undergraduates, and it is no small request, is that they take full responsibility for choosing a career they care about. To demand more is impractical and more than a little elitist.

CHRISTIAN PETERS
Iowa City, Iowa

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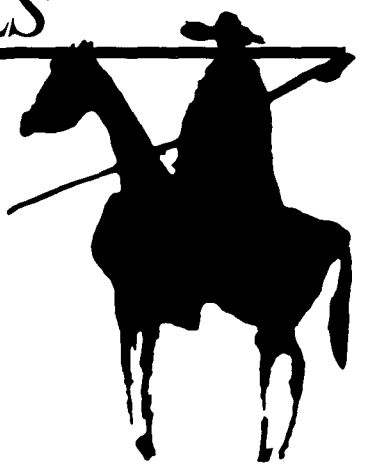
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



The war against discrimination must be waged on all fronts. That, at any rate, seems to be the conviction of the Huntington Beach (California) Union School District Board, which has adopted a new policy forbidding the selection of cheerleaders based on the size and shape of their breasts. The board has also ordered school district employees not to recommend breast reduction or enlargement surgery to students. Only in California....

Have you noticed a pattern in our relations with Japan? Whenever the heat is on in the U.S. Congress or press about one of Japan's unfair trade practices, the Japanese will promise reform, the story will fade from the front page, and, once it has, the reform will never happen. Here's an example, told in a new report by Stuart Auerbach that was buried in a recent edition of *The Washington Post*:

"Japan refused today to open its major government-funded public works projects to foreign construction and engineering companies, backing away from a commitment that outgoing Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone made to President Reagan last month," administration officials said....

What most of us have suspected as one of the great truths of the Reagan administration is confirmed in a new book by Terrel H. Bell, the secretary of education during Reagan's first term. Bell writes that he heard "mid-level, right-wing staffers" in the administration make racial slurs, one of the more elegant of which was to refer to the slain civil rights leader as "Martin Luther Coon." Many of the Reaganites are bigots who talk this way in private if not in public. Many others may not be as vulgar about it, but their bias is no less real. I'm glad someone from the inside has finally had the courage to tell the truth about both groups. The irony is that few of them have known more than a handful of blacks in their entire lives....

When Dean Rusk recently revealed that John Kennedy was willing to go public with his offer to Khrushchev to withdraw our missiles from Turkey if Russia withdrew its from Cuba in 1962, I suspect most people didn't even know the offer had been made at all. In fact, it was made secretly. That was first made known in Robert Kennedy's *Thirteen Days*, which appeared after his death, and, however many copies may have been sold, actually must have been read by almost no one. So it was still news when we published

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it in an article by Graham Allison in October 1972. Among those to whom it was news was Charles Bartlett, who, along with the late Stewart Alsop, had written a famous article in *The Saturday Evening Post* in November 1962 that said John Kennedy was incensed at Adlai Stevenson for being a sissy for recommending we take the missiles out of Turkey. When I was editing the Allison article, I called Bartlett to tell him Kennedy had criticized Stevenson for suggesting exactly what Kennedy had done. Bartlett was shocked.

The fact that so many people—including Bartlett, who was a close friend—did not know about Kennedy's true position was a tragedy of the sixties. Many officials in charge of Vietnam policy thought the Cuban missile crisis had been a triumph of machismo instead of reasonable negotiation, and proceeded to be tough instead of smart during the crucial stages of that war.

It is to Kennedy's great credit that he was reasonable in agreeing to withdraw our missiles from Turkey. It is to his lasting discredit that he let the world think otherwise—that he had simply been tougher than Khrushchev....

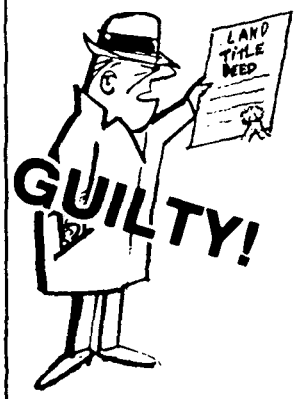
Thirteen months ago, John J. Davin, an assistant postmaster general, was assigned to slash the red tape from the U.S. Postal Service's 1,327-page purchasing manual. The recently unveiled product of his labor was called "one of the deepest reductions in red tape Washington has seen" by *The Washington Post*. You may get a faint glimmer of the dimensions of the bureaucratic problem on the banks of the Potomac when you learn that Davin's triumph still takes up two volumes and totals 460 pages....

Here's another glimmer. According to a recent report from the General Accounting Office, more than four million Social Security recipients were paid the wrong amount between 1981 and 1986. Underpayments averaged $591, overpayments, $1,069....

One-hundred-twenty foreign service officers were involuntarily retired at the end of September. This is a sad event in their lives, and I regret that my observations about it cannot be appropriately charitable. Two items caught my eye in a story *The New York Times* did about them, and neither reflects very well on the Foreign Service.

One concerns the Office of Career Transition that the State Department has set up to help the retirees, who are mostly in their forties. Will the office's five professional staff members find outside jobs for the retirees? No. With a justice that is a poetic tribute to the run-around bureaucrats give the rest of us when we need practical help finding Aunt Mary's lost Social Security check, its spokesman told the *Times*: "We don't find jobs and place people—they have to place themselves. We act as a

Let's Not Dodge the Truth—the Moral Truth



Labor and capital produce our entire GNP. Labor gets wages and capital gets interest. Fine, no quarrel: labor and capital are entitled to all they produce.

But they must share at least 24% of what they produce with a non-producer—the landowner! (Substantiation of the 24% figure upon request.) Landowners **as landowners** produce nothing nor do they offer to the productive process anything they or anyone else have produced. Their earned income is pure robbery, even if the victims are unaware of it.

The solution is to tax land, not labor; tax land, not capital (factories, retail sales, etc.). If you're interested in real reform, write us for more information—

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facilitator, a support group."

The other item that struck me was a statement about the group by a State Department official: "Psychologically it is hard to realize that your fluency in Twi or Tagalog is totally worthless after years of effort in producing these polished skills." The *Times* reporter swallowed this pitch without blinking an eye. The truth is that it is almost totally fraudulent. Few FSOs are fluent in Third World languages. This has been a constant problem, much bemoaned over the years, and much unchanged after the bemoaning. Just think back to the hostages who were taken at the American embassy in Tehran in 1979. Fewer than one in ten spoke Farsi....

Since we're on the bureaucracy, we might as well hand out a few more demerits. These are awarded to the Federal Asset Disposition Association. It is one of those semi-autonomous agencies like the Postal Service, the prototypes of which were spawned in the thirties by the late Robert Moses in the belief that they would be above politics and be able to attract higher-caliber employees because they paid higher salaries. Thus at FADA—have you ever heard of it?—we have Roslyn B. Payne, its president, making $250,000 a year and Robert Axley, its chief counsel, getting $145,000, whereas the top pay for regular civil servants is about $70,000.

What does the government get for the extra pay? Decisions like this: to hire private detectives to investigate a critic of the agency; and to hire Robert Strauss's law firm "on how best to deal" with a congressional inquiry into the agency's affairs. Axley, by the way, was associated with Strauss's son in some real estate deals that helped push several Texas S&Ls to the brink of bankruptcy. The salaries for Payne and Axley and the detectives' and lawyers' fees and the bail-out money for the S&Ls all came from federal deposit insurance funds....

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SEE DETAILS ON PAGE 58

* NO COMPUTER PURCHASE NECESSARY

Southern mothers have long been fond of giving their sons names that will make them eligible for careers in the clergy, academic administration, or literature. The name usually has three parts, as in John Mason Brown or Robert Penn Warren. If there are only two, you can be sure they will both be last names. The latest example is Pinckney Benedict, a promising young writer from West Virginia....

I do not want to risk hurting the feelings of the recently bereaved, so I have changed the names in the following announcement that recently appeared in the business section of *The New York Times*, but otherwise it's word-for-word as it appeared:

In memory of our longtime
Friend and Associate
Sam Smith
Known to the
Wall Street Community
As a Pioneer
in Options Strategies
We extend our deepest
sympathies to his family
Shearson, Paine, Hutton, Inc....

Speaking of Wall Street, Steven Waldman, a former editor of the *Monthly*, deserves a pat on the back for the article that appeared in these pages in March of this year warning of what stock index futures could do to the Republic and to your pocketbook. He wrote, "The combination of stock index futures and computerized program trading has created a souped-up market.... which could turn a minor downturn into a major one," which is exactly what happened in October. While you have to put up half the amount you invest in stocks, you can buy these futures with as little as 20 percent cash. Doesn't that sound suspiciously like 1929—and could you believe it when the stock exchange permitted a resumption of computerized program trading on November 9?...

If you paid your fire chief $75,000 annually, would you want him to take an average of more than ten weeks off a

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year? If not, don't move to Fairfax County, Virginia, because that's where Chief Warren E. Isman is pulling down that salary and averaging that much leave over the past four years. He says he delegates "a great deal." Delegating permits him to make speeches in cities like Singapore, Rotterdam, Tokyo, and Jerusalem and to make repeated visits to England, Australia, and New Zealand, where his oratory seems to go over especially well.

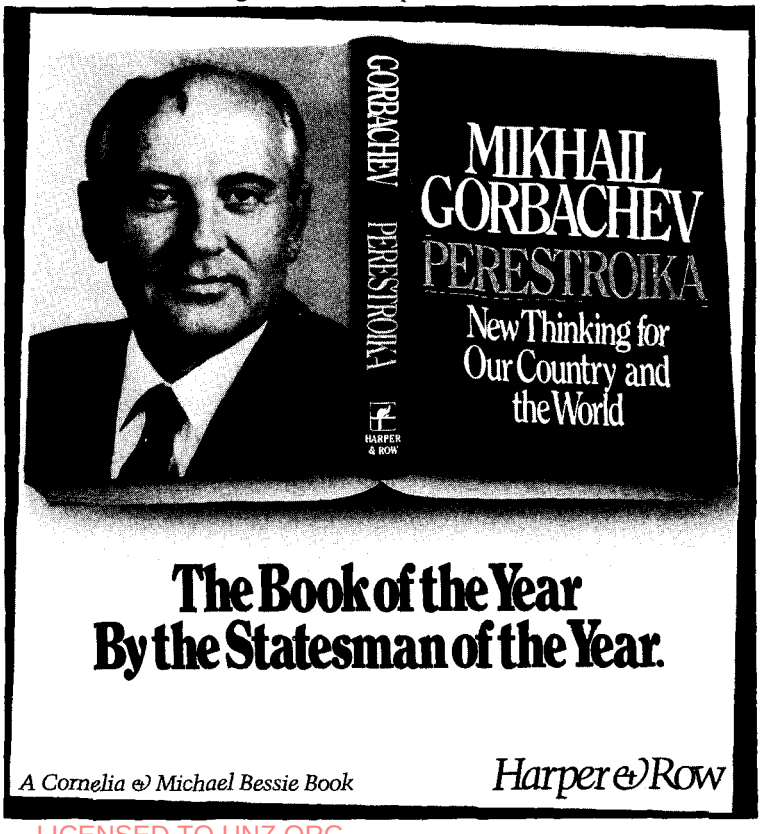
The people of Fairfax County can at least content themselves with the fact that Isman's travels are paid for by his hosts. We who live in the District of Columbia have our own globe-trotter, only she sticks *us* with the bill. Cora Wilds is the chairman of the District's Boxing Commission. Her dedication to the advancement of boxing has taken her to Bangkok, Aruba, Montreal, Dearborn, New Orleans, Reno, and Atlantic City. She billed these trips to the city. She also billed many of them to an international boxing organization....

There's more white-knuckled news from our deregulated airlines. First this headline from *The Washington Times*: "FAA study discovers Eastern to be worst in meeting repairs." Then, according to *The Washington Post*, Eastern pilots testifying at a congressional hearing said the airline suspended a dozen pilots for refusing to fly aircraft they considered unsafe. According to *Newsday*, one of the pilots was suspended for refusing to fly a plane with a broken altitude alert system, which federal regulations require be fixed as soon as the plane reaches an airport "where the plane can be fixed." Eastern's excuse was that it didn't have to replace the part until the plane reached an airport where the part was *available*. That could mean days or weeks, of course.

Another Eastern pilot told the congressmen this about airlines' practices: "They reduce spare parts inventories to bare bones; they schedule aircraft so tightly there is no time for proper maintenance." And *The Wall Street Journal* told of "a Delta captain reporting for an early-morning flight from Bangor to Boston, smelling of alcohol, slurring his speech, and needing assistance in walking."...

Did you see that the Department of Transportation has approved the merger of USAir and Piedmont? We're going to end up with seven giant airlines that gouge their customers, cheat on safety, and cut out service to small cities. That's what deregulation does for you. And don't forget what it's done for your phone bill....

Want to know the secret of the Mafia's success? To a large extent, real estate developers, contractors, and suppliers accept the mob, according to a recent report by New York State's Organized Crime Task Force, "in some instances as a necessary evil, providing stability and predictability, in other instances as an organization which can provide valuable services."



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What, pray tell, are those valuable services? "By controlling the activities of disparate groups of racketeers preying on the industry," the commission explains, "syndicates can assure contractors that they will only have to pay off once for a specified result."...

In Santa Clara County, California, two private law firms hired to defend the county in a jail-overcrowding case have been paid more than $70,000 for only two months of their time. This is the tip of a vast national iceberg. It used to be that the legal affairs of a county or a city were handled by a salaried employee, just as a state's legal work would be performed by the attorney general's staff. But increasingly such work is handed out to law firms. The catch for the taxpayer is that he is being stuck with those $35,000-a-month bills. As recently as the 1960s, my father was paid only $8,000 a year to handle the legal problems of his county. It was considered a part-time job, and he was able to get the work done by devoting his mornings to it. But once you have private firms involved, the great run-the-meter imperative of American law comes into play and every task is transformed into a major production that of course entails a major billing....

Did you know that the CIA appoints its own inspector general? In other major agencies, this official is named by the president because his loyalty should be to the country, not to his agency. What can happen when the agency chooses is indicated by the fact that the CIA chose as its inspector general a man who had been responsible for the illegal mining of Nicaraguan harbors in 1984....

Congress has failed to take the two most sensible steps to cut the deficit. It should have made Social Security benefits fully taxable, and it should have maintained the 38 percent top rate on income taxes instead of lowering it in 1988. Neither would hurt the poor, and combined they would have produced about $18 billion in the first year and much, much more thereafter. The villains on the Senate Finance Committee who led the opposition to these sensible steps were Bill Bradley and Lloyd Bentsen on income taxes and George Mitchell, Don Riegle and Barbara Mikulski on Social Security. I'm especially disappointed that Bill Bradley, whom I have admired so much, has become a protector of the rich....

How are we to explain Mario Cuomo's behavior in a fee dispute with his former student and law partner, Michael Nicholson?

Here are the facts:

Perini Corp., a construction company, had retained the Cuomo-Nicholson firm in 1973 to file a claim against New York City. Cuomo left the firm in 1975, giving up his interest in the firm for $100,000. The Perini claim was settled for $7.5 million in 1979. In 1980, Cuomo told Perini to withhold $600,000 of the $1,466,000 fee it owed his former firm, saying he wanted a share of the fee. The trouble was, not only had Cuomo left the firm four years before the claim was settled, he was lieutenant governor of New York when he told Perini to withhold the fee, and Perini at that time was doing over $20 million in business with the state. "It's hard to see," Geoffrey Hazard, a Yale Law School professor who helped draft rules of conduct for the American Bar Association, told *The Wall Street Journal*'s Stanley Penn, "how the contractor could disregard that (Mr. Cuomo) is a high state official." It is also hard to see how Cuomo, after accepting that $100,000 for his interest in the firm, could justify claiming more than a third of a fee for work that almost all seems to have been done after he left....

"Four years after the Navy discovered that it had purchased defective fire hose nozzles from a disreputable firm, 52 of the nozzles were still aboard aircraft carriers, destroyers, and other combat vessels," *The Washington Post* recently revealed. Another *Post* article revealed that four of the Navy's most modern missiles—the Sparrow, the Harpoon, the Phoenix, and the HARM—have been purchased over the past 16 months despite knowledge of potential defects that could cause them to fail in combat. Some are deployed with U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.

One reason for a military draft that would take the rich

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and poor alike is that if the sons of the powerful were in the service, their parents would not permit outrages like these to continue. Those who remember when we had such a draft during World War II know, for example, how quickly inadequate fighter planes, like the P-40, were replaced by P-47s and P-51s, which gave the enemy fits....

Restaurants are catching on to the Frequent Flyer con. Here's the headline from a recent ad for the Columbia Steak House in Louisville, Kentucky:

Have Lunch On
Your Expense Account,
And Keep The Free
Bonus for Yourself

The game is the same. The bonus goes to the frequent flying or lunching employee of an organization with expense accounts. The bill goes to the employer. The employee's conscience is not troubled because the employer usually is a large corporation with lots of money to burn. The catch, of course, is this: because of tax deductibility, the rest of us pay for 80 percent or more of the original flights and lunches, and for the freebies, because the prices are inflated to cover them....

I used to practice law before I decided to go straight. What I enjoyed most about it was trying cases. There are few greater challenges to one's intellectual and empathetic skills than figuring out what the judge and the jury and the opposing counsel and the witnesses are thinking and feeling as you try to frame your next question. And if you have some room left over in your mental computer, you should also be considering how the members of the courts who might hear the case on appeal would react. Your adrenalin pump goes into high gear as all these thoughts flash through your mind while you attempt to maintain an appearance of outward calm and control to mask what is often inner desperation.

If you would like to get an idea of courtroom reality, two recent books—*Outlaws* by George V. Higgins and *Presumed Innocent* by Scott Turow—do a remarkable job of providing an insider's feel....

The Iran-contra hearings ended without answering the question that has nagged at me the most. Which of the geniuses in charge of our national security affairs recommended that Ronald Reagan send the Ayatollah an inscribed Bible?...

I congratulate New York City for its new policy on hand-cuffing prisoners. This had not been a front-burner issue for me until I was arrested a couple of years ago for standing in front of the South African embassy in Washington with a placard protesting apartheid. My hands were cuffed behind my back. This affects one's balance, so, as I tried to step up into the paddy wagon and at the same time bend my head to avoid the low door, I fell. It was a humiliating feeling. There is no need to subject nonviolent prisoners to it, and that is the policy New York has adopted....

I know that our readers, as keen students of what is truly important in this world, have been waiting for my comments on the NFL players' strike. First, the players were dumb to focus originally on free agency when they should have concentrated more on just and reasonable issues like protection against injury and guaranteed contracts.

The latter is a little-understood matter about which the player's concern is justified. As things stand now, he is asked to sign a contract for, say, three years, meaning he has to play for his team for three years if it wants him to. But the team can fire him anytime. Assuming he makes a bona fide effort to play to the best of his abilities, the team should have no right to drop him without paying off his contract.

The owners, who kept saying they would settle all issues rapidly if the players dropped the free agency demand, showed what terrible people they really are when the players dropped that demand and the owners then refused to negotiate seriously. The owners saw the players were weakening and, in the great tradition of rich people everywhere, decided to stomp on them.

The replacement players, at least in Washington, were a joy to watch. They played for the love of playing and for a chance to have a future in football. They showed absolutely no sign of the spoiled-childism that is characteristic of most of the stars. I miss them....

—*Charles Peters*

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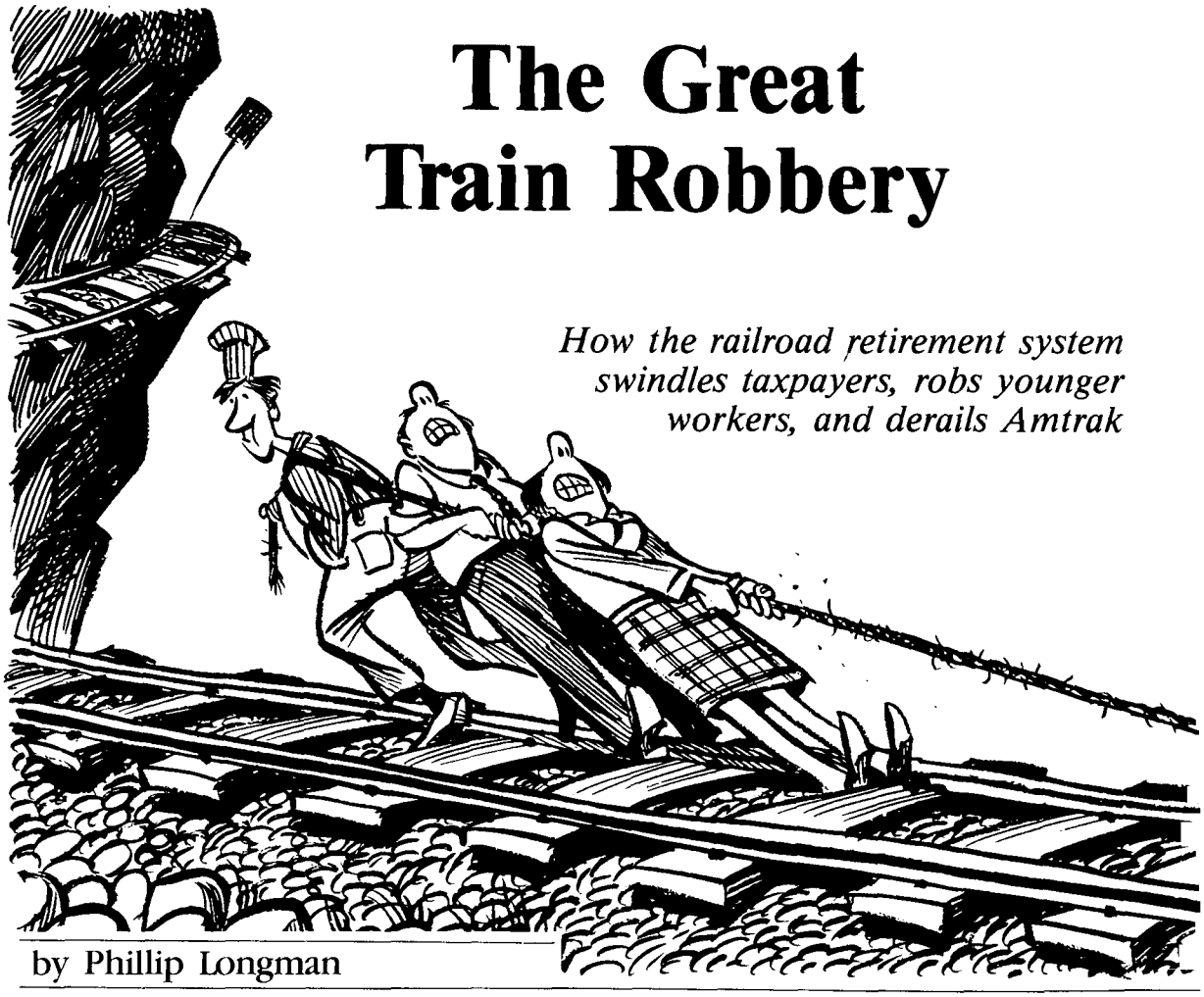
The Great Train Robbery

How the railroad retirement system swindles taxpayers, robs younger workers, and derails Amtrak



by Phillip Longman

In America, the railroads have often been first: the nation's first $1 billion industry and the first way to get from New York to San Francisco without a horse. While many don't realize it, the railroads also led the way for a great liberal cause: old-age pensions. In the 19th century, the railroad industry initiated the nation's first widespread private pension plans, offering workers some semblance of security in their old age.

During the Great Depression, the railroads were again at the center of innovation. Congress took over the patchwork of private railroad pensions in 1934, a year before it established Social Security to protect the elderly nationwide. During congressional debate, one supporter promised that the railroad retirement system would become "a trail blazer." Now, sadly, it's blazing a trail to bankruptcy.

Phillip Longman, a frequent contributor to The Washington Monthly, *is the author of* Born to Pay: The New Politics of Aging in America. *Houghton Mifflin, 1987.*

To this day, railroad workers are not covered by Social Security but by this separate retirement system. This year, the federal government is pumping in $2.8 billion to keep railroad retirement afloat. In addition, railroad companies and their employees shoulder staggering payroll taxes. While workers covered by Social Security pay 7.15 percent of their income, railroad workers contribute 11.4 percent. The combined employer-employee payroll tax is 14.3 percent for workers covered by Social Security, compared to a mammoth 33.3 percent for the railroads. Even with this heavy taxation, the railroad retirement system's own actuary, in his most optimistic projection, predicts bankruptcy in 20 years. More likely, it's just a recession away.

These crippling payments are surely hastening the decline of America's railroads. With only one current employee for every three retirees, roughly one-sixth of the cost of moving freight by rail in this country now goes to pay benefits to those

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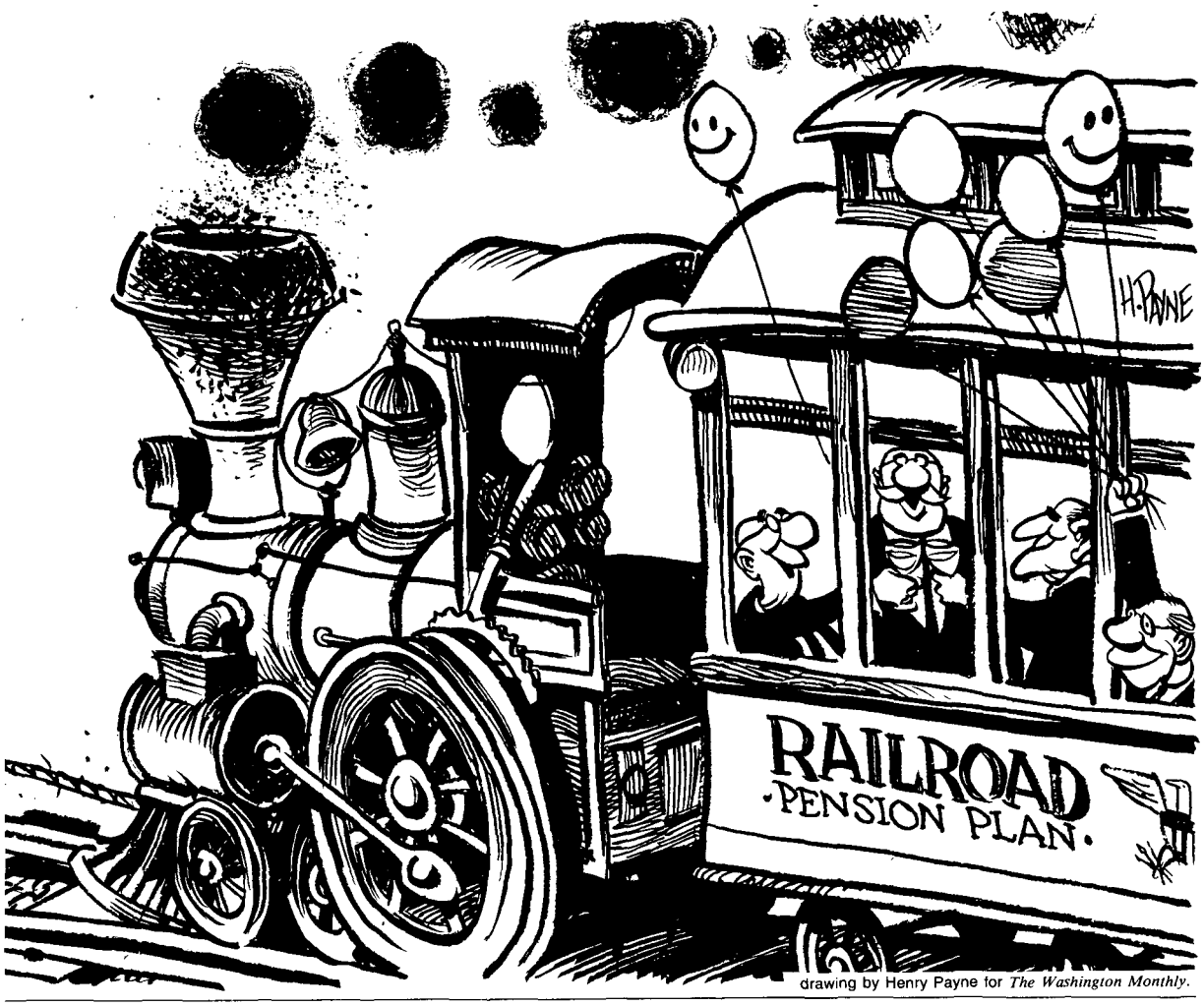

drawing by Henry Payne for *The Washington Monthly*.

no longer working on the railroads. Largely because of our system of railroad retirement, it is now cheaper to haul coal to Brooklyn from Poland than it is from the mines of West Virginia.

The sad state of railroad pensions holds important lessons for reformers of other troubled funds like Medicare and Social Security. For decades, entrenched lobbies and their accomplices in Congress have pushed the costs of today's programs onto tomorrow's taxpayers. Like too many entitlements, railroad retirement shows how a worthy cause can be perverted by the politics of selfishness.

Racketeers, leeches, and moonshine

The problems of the current system began as early as the 19th century, when the railroads established their own private pension plans. Instead of stockpiling reserves, they ladled out cash on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, paying current benefits out of current revenues. Money was not stockpiled for future costs. Within a generation, many of these programs were reeling with debt. For example, the Pennsylvania Railroad pension plan, begun in 1903 for less than $300,000, cost $3.5 million annually by 1925.

These kinds of expenses sparked an industry-wide crisis—even before the Great Depression. "How long can American Railroads stand the financial strain of their present pension plans?" asked the trade journal *Railway Age* in 1925. "What assurance has anyone that current revenues in 1950 will be sufficient to stand the strain of pension liabilities accruing in 1925?" As it turned out, there was no assurance at all. Those mismanaged private railroad pensions survived only because of federal intervention.

Interestingly, for years both management and labor leaders resisted a federal bailout. Management feared that a federal pension program would mean higher benefits for workers and

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higher taxes for them, a prediction that proved accurate. Meanwhile, rail union leaders opposed the idea for the same reason that Samuel Gompers and other union leaders initially opposed Social Security: they preferred pension plans with union leaders in charge of the till.

So a push for federal aid came from the rank and file, especially from the grassroots Railway Employee's Pension Association which was founded in 1929 to lobby for the plan. Led by W.W. Royster, the half-million members of the association confronted the powerful heads of the nation's 21 rail labor unions. It was tough going. "We have been assailed and held up to ridicule by our labor chiefs as racketeers. . .as leeches, and our endeavors referred to as inspired by moonshine," said Royster, three years into the battle. As grassroots enthusiasm continued to swell, the union bosses finally relented and joined the fight for federal aid.

By 1934, labor was pressing Congress to pass the Railroad Retirement Act. They had history on their side. Congress had long used the railroads as a laboratory for progressive social legislation. While the Supreme Court had struck down such legislation in other industries, the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution directly empowered Congress to regulate the railroads, and the Supreme Court let such legislation stand. Over the years, Congress granted rail workers the first eight-hour workday, collective bargaining, workman's compensation, generous severance pay and other benefits. Given this history—and Congressional interest in a pilot program to test Social Security—the bill to establish the federally run rail pension system had widespread support.

But its flaws were visible to more sober analysts. Franklin Roosevelt's coordinator of transportation, Joseph B. Eastman, urged its veto and set his staff of 2,000 to work on a fiscally sound retirement plan. Demographics made it no easy task; the railroads were already short on young employees and long on retirees.

Despite Eastman's warnings, pressure for the bill, sponsored by Sen. Robert Wagner, mounted. Wagner, the father-to-be of Social Security, leaned on FDR, reminding him that hundreds of thousands of his constituents wanted fast relief and hinting at the political consequences of denying them. "I do not know of any other measure during the past few years that has tied to it so greatly the hopes and sympathies of the great masses of working people," he wrote in June, 1934. "To delay enactment over the summer would be most unfortunate." FDR condemned the bill as "crudely drawn" and called it financially irresponsible. Then, grudgingly, he signed it.

Although the Supreme Court struck down the bill on a technicality, Congress found a way around the Court's objections. And this time, rail management dropped their objections to the bill when Congress agreed to assume *all the liabilities* of the carriers' foundering private pension plans.

Moonlight madness

The pension plan was a fine idea. Railroad workers, like the rest of us, need financial protection as they grow older and their earning power declines. But the benefits ought to bear some relation to financial reality. The Railroad Retirement Fund just doesn't.

Most private plans, for example, give retired employees 50 to 60 percent of their final take-home pay. In 1985, when the Labor Department surveyed 21 million workers in large and medium firms, it found no firm replaced more than 82.5 percent of their final take-home pay. That's miserly compared to most railroad workers, who are entitled to up to 125 percent of their final take-home pay.

How did railroad pensions become so bloated? The answer lies in the politics that all entitlement programs breed. As with Social Security and Medicare, the very existence of the system provided railroad retirees with added incentive to organize as a special interest. Competing unions and trade organizations get caught in bidding wars to deliver lucrative benefits.

Consider a payment called the "windfall benefit." A perk of military and civil service retirement systems as well as the railroads, it allows those who work at a second job to collect the equivalent of two pensions. Say a railroad worker moonlights at a gas station. When he retires, he can collect Social Security for pumping gas *and* a railroad pension. What's more, the combination of these two pensions is substantially higher than if he worked exclusively under either system. That's because both systems favor workers with short-term employment and low earnings. It's double-dipping with an extra scoop.

In 1951, Congress eliminated this bonus, at the urging of both the carriers and labor leaders (who were then more responsive to their younger members). Still, mail flowed into Congress from retirees complaining about the cut. To lower the political heat, Congress raised overall railroad

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HARPER'S INDEX

Interest payments on the federal debt that were made to foreigners in 1984 : $19,800,000,000
U.S. foreign aid in 1984 : $15,583,000,000
Hours spent on strike by Italians in 1979 : 192,700,000
In 1984 : 51,000,000
Rank of Italy, Argentina, and Libya in annual per capita pasta consumption : 1, 2, 3
Pounds of pasta the average American ate in 1975 : 6.8
In 1984 : 11
Number of Americans who drink Coca-Cola for breakfast : 965,000
Quarts of ice cream the average Southerner eats each year : 12
The average New Englander : 23
Potholes in the United States : 55,961,000
Cost of having a car blessed at the Daishi Buddhist temple in Kawasaki, Japan : $10.77
Cost of a car wash at Steve's Detailing in New York City : $145
Percentage of American women who said they liked sports cars in 1976 : 39
Who say that today : 56
Percentage of American men who say they sleep in the nude : 19
Percentage of American women : 6
Copies of *Bride's* bought by the magazine's average reader : 7
Percentage of black high-school graduates under 25 who are unemployed : 26.8
Percentage of white high-school dropouts under 25 who are unemployed : 26.2
Amount South Africa spends to educate the average white student each year (in rand) : 1,385
The average "colored" student : 872
The average black student : 192
Number of Jews permitted to emigrate from the Soviet Union in 1979 : 51,320
In 1984 : 896
Number of Americans who emigrate each year : 100,000
Percentage of New York City children who live below the poverty line : 40
Average age at which American girls began to menstruate in 1900 : 14.3
In 1984 : 12.9
Percentage of American obstetricians/gynecologists who have been sued for malpractice : 67
Number of Americans who have been killed on the job by robots : 1
Number of Americans currently frozen in the hope of one day coming back to life : 33
Number of Americans holding reservations with Pan Am for a trip to the moon : 90,002

Figures cited are the latest available as of April 1985. Sources are listed on page 74.

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retirement benefits by 15 percent. Rank-and-file groups were not appeased; they prodded Congress into forming a special committee and restoring the benefit just a year later.

Finally, in 1974, Congress screwed up the courage to eliminate windfall benefits for workers retiring after that year. But by exempting retirees already on the rolls, it thrust an enormous burden on future taxpayers. Today, 35 percent of the nation's 954,000 railroad retirees reap windfall benefits, averaging $179 a month in addition to their other benefits. Not a king's ransom, but multiplied over a period of years it has become an extraordinary cost for taxpayers. To bear this cost, Congress has had to dip into general revenues, totaling about $275 million this year alone. The General Accounting Office estimates that taxpayers will have to shell out $3.3 billion in additional subsidies by the year 2000—just to fund one single benefit that has been denied to younger railroad workers for more than a decade.

Sympathy for the devil

Congress is bullied into these kind of expenses, in part, because so many retirees are convinced that they are entitled to them. "The great myth I hear all the time from the retirees is 'I paid for these benefits,' " complains one rail union official. The average retiree draws $1,840 a month—exhausting his contributions during his first two years of retirement. Yet most speak of taxes as "contributions," of benefits as "returns," and of "reserves" building up in some mysterious "trust fund." Of course, what the government is actually doing is taxing current employees and carriers and giving the money to retirees.

The rest of us pay too. Fully half of the system's revenues come from Social Security trust funds and the U.S. Treasury. According to the General Accounting Office, $38 billion in Social Security trust funds will be pumped into the railroad retirement system between now and the year 2000.

But while government dole-outs keep the system solvent, many retirees are convinced that the government is actually stealing their money. One prevalent rumor maintains that their retirement monies were raided to pay for the Marshall Plan. "The letters come in waves," said Bill Poulous, a spokesman for the Railroad Retirement Board. Another rumor claims that the railroad pension funds paid for the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees. Effie Mae Smith, whose late husband worked for the Missouri Pacific and who now serves as secretary-treasurer of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railroad Employees, even claims to know the amount: $50 million. But when I asked her where that figure came from, she said, "It's just something I hear from a good number of railroad retirees in our different units across the country, men who were working at the time."

The rumors persist despite denials from the government, the unions, and the carriers. Says Frank N. Wilner, a spokesman for the American Association of Railroads, "It's like the tale of Proctor and Gamble contributing to the devil."

In part, the rumors of government raiding the coffers have arisen because of mind-numbing accounting methods that transfer money between the pension funds and the Social Security account. This system, called "financial interchange," was meant to make sure that neither system subsidized the other. In the early 1950s, when there were still more workers than retirees in the railroad industry, the railroad retirement system paid substantial sums to Social Security. Since 1957, however, Social Security has been the locomotive hauling the railroad retirement system.

In addition, these rumors arise because the railroad retirement system, like all federal pension programs, purchases government bonds whenever it has cash left over after meeting current expenses. These bonds, in turn, are used to help finance government's day-to-day operations —but are repaid, with interest. And, of course, the rumors also persist because they're what people want to believe. Few retirees want to think of themselves as first-class passengers on a welfare locomotive. It's easier to strike the pose of victim instead.

Japan si, Amtrak no

The explosion in railroad taxes now threatens the very survival of the railroad industry—and, as a consequence, railroad retirement itself. Combined payroll taxes have risen from an original 6 percent to 33.3 percent today. And President Reagan, that avowed opponent of tax hikes, has sought to push them even higher, to 36.3 percent in the next two years. Since 1937, the taxes borne by the railroads have jumped from a maximum of $99 per employee to almost $8,000 a year for a typical union worker today.

These tax hikes beget a crazy cycle. As taxes rise, employment drops, so taxes rise again. Since 1979, railroad employment has fallen 44 percent.

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Sure, a lot of that stems from the general decline of American manufacturing, but the retirement program has increased the blow. "The railroads keep laying off workers just so they can pay higher payroll taxes," complains John McCown, a spokesman for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. It's gotten so bad, according to Norman Soloman, chief actuary for the Railroad Retirement Board, that workers entering the railroad industry today stand just a 40 percent chance of holding their jobs long enough to qualify for any pension.

Yet the carriers have little choice but to lay off workers. The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad, for example, pays twice as much in railroad retirement taxes as it does for diesel fuel, and three times as much as it earns in after-tax profits, according to Executive Vice President David Hughes. "There's only one thing we can do when payroll taxes go up," says Hughes, "and that is layoff people."

With these pressures, no wonder Amtrak is always in danger of going under. A full 23 percent of its personnel costs goes towards retirement, compared to 3.1 percent for the average pension plan, according to the Commerce Department. One quarter of its federal subsidy goes towards retirees. With this burden, the U.S. stands no chance of developing the state-of-the-art railroads enjoyed in France and Japan.

What makes this situation especially galling to Amtrak officials is that only one-tenth of these taxes go to former Amtrak employees. In existence only since 1971, Amtrak has relatively few retirees. Its huge pension taxes go to support retirees from other railroads who never even worked for Amtrak. Were it allowed to develop its own private pension plan, Amtrak could provide all the benefits the railroad retirement system currently pays to its employees, pre-fund all future benefits, and still save at least $20 million a year—even if its workers made no contributions to such a plan. Yet if Amtrak is allowed to opt out of railroad retirement, the system will go broke that much sooner.

Felix Rohatyn, beware

How can we ever get out from under this mess? No one in the industry seems to have any idea, except to ask Congress to appoint another special commission, like the one they established in 1970 to develop a permanent solution. Sadly, the rail unions, whose workers stand to lose the most if the pension system collapses, concentrate their energies on preserving benefits for current beneficiaries, with little regard for the retirement needs of their younger workers. "Politically, it's unthinkable that anyone would get up at a union convention and say, 'Let's get ourselves out from underneath this plan,'" says one union official.

These days politicians in both parties share a fantasy that somehow a cooperative triangle of labor, management, and government can sit down at a table and, with Kennedy-School-like efficiency, work out problems like railroad retirement. In fact, the railroad retirement system has been run by just such a committee from the beginning. The railroad retirement board's three members come from industry, labor, and government. Industrial policy mavens like Felix Rohatyn should pay attention to what's been wrought.

The conservative solution, peddled by Reagan's Office of Management and Budget, is a long-term plan for privatizing the railroad retirement system. But any attempt to put the system on a sound actuarial basis would be prohibitively expensive, at least in the short term, because the system is already obligated to pay $44 billion in future benefits even if the railroad industry never hires another worker. The American Association of Railroads estimates that a financially sound private plan would require payroll taxes nearing 50 percent. And even if a private plan could be set up under law, the federal government must insure it against collapse.

The answer is clear: There is no way these debts will go away, unless Congress cuts benefits for current and future retirees.

In confronting the looming bankruptcy of the railroad retirement system, it is important that we learn from our mistakes. Railroad retirement has its own special problems, but it is failing for the reasons all our social insurance programs are failing: we've promised more than we can deliver.

Medicare, for example, is projected to be insolvent by the year 2002, according to system actuaries, but Congress continues to add new benefits. Because we're a graying country, the Social Security system may eventually require payroll taxes as high as 40 percent, which would devastate the American economy. We cannot simply assume that the next generation can pay for the promises we make. Nor can we meet the challenges of an aging society by allowing special interests to run the government and make commitments we cannot afford. Unless we radically change direction, the railroad retirement system signals trouble down the line. □

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

Date: September 16, 1987

To: Assistant Regional Chiefs

File Ref:

From: Cindy Schoenike, Deputy Director
Bureau of Community Corrections

Subject: POS Lapsed Balances

Attached for your information is a printout from the Business Office detailing POS and Halfway House funds that were not spent in FY 1987 and therefore lapsed.

While I know it is difficult to spend every last penny and some lapses are always going to occur, the magnitude of these lapses makes me extremely uncomfortable for three reasons:

1. if this continues to occur, some astute budget analyst is going to notice a pattern and reduce our appropriations, figuring that if we don't spend it we must not need it;
2. significant underspending makes it d___ difficult to justify any increases in these appropriations in the budget request process for any reason; and
3. I am concerned that clients needing services are not receiving them.

Jim Clinton should work with Marg Walstad to provide me with an explanation of how and why we lapsed so much money last fiscal year. And all of you should work to assure that we do not repeat such lapses this fiscal year.

CS:kg

Attachment

cc: Marg Walstad

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Frank Fat's Napkin:

How the Trial Lawyers (and the Doctors!) Sold Out to the Tobacco Companies

by Paul Glastris

It's no secret that the 800 lobbyists registered to do business in the state of California wield a certain amount of influence. Sacramento wags refer to them collectively as the "third house" of the legislature. Lacking a marble building commensurate with their power, lobbyists tend to conduct their affairs in borrowed surroundings: spare meeting rooms in the state house, suites at hotels, and often around tables at Frank Fat's, an art deco Chinese restaurant a couple of blocks from the capitol.

It was at Frank Fat's, on the evening of September 10, 1987, that State Senator Bill Lockyer scribbled on a cloth napkin. At his table were lobbyists representing the state's trial lawyers, doctors, and insurance companies—the three largest contributors to the campaign coffers of state legislators—as well as the Chamber of Commerce. For years these groups had fought over the state's civil liability laws. What Lockyer wrote on the napkin was an outline of a "nonaggression pact," as it came to be known, in which the parties agreed to cease hostilities and support radical legislation making it more difficult and less profitable to sue in civil court. One provision raised the standard of proof an injured person must meet to obtain damages. Another granted virtual immunity to "inherently unsafe" products, such as tobacco.

Paul Glastris is a former editor of The Washington Monthly. *Michael Willrich and Charles Montgomery provided research assistance.*

The California "compromise" gave something to everyone at the table. Manufacturers got protection from law suits. So did insurance companies, which also won relief from threatened regulation of their industry. Doctors got a promise that they wouldn't lose lawsuit protections they already had. Trial lawyers, long opposed to these "liability reform" measures, won increases in the fees they can collect in malpractice cases. "Unfortunately the victims who will be harmed weren't in the room when the deal was cut," complained Harry Snyder, the regional director of the Consumers Union.

Such a sweeping, controversial measure, you might think, would require months of debate in legislative hearings. Instead, the bill, written by the lobbyists, went before the legislature the next day, the final, frenetic day of the 1987 session. Legislative leaders who supported it, announced they'd accept no amendments: that would upset the balance gingerly achieved at Frank Fat's. Indeed, while it was being thoughtfully mulled over at a one-hour committee hearing, the bill was already on the assembly floor in a mad swirl of more than 500 bills being considered. The legislature passed it by wide margins, and the governor signed it. About the only evidence legislators have of their involvement in crafting this fundamental new law is The Napkin, which

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Lockyer displayed to reporters like a trophy—"I'm willing to participate in some of the theater," he said.

In state legislatures, the quick slip at the end of the session is a familiar ploy. But in the history of special interest politics, the California Civil Liability Reform Act breaks new ground. No one in Sacramento had ever seen a bill with an accompanying peace pact, or one that so studiously avoided serving the public interest. While a major premise of liability reform is that it will cut insurance rates, the bill's proponents now admit that it won't. What the act *will* do is make it more difficult for anyone to sue a corporation for civil liability. And if you manage to win a malpractice suit against your doctor, the bill assures that more of your settlement will go to your lawyer and less to you.

But the biggest losers are those who suffer the diseases and deaths caused by tobacco. The new law grants virtual immunity to tobacco manufacturers. There is a chance that it could be found unconstitutional or interpreted as not applying to certain claims. But if it is not, anyone bringing a liability suit against a tobacco company—including 27 who had filed cases *before* the law was passed—can stack their papers, zip up their briefcases, leave the courtroom, and by and large forget about collecting damages.

California isn't the only state lending a helping hand to the tobacco lobby, only the most brazen. In 1987, two states, New Jersey and Ohio, passed liability reform laws that, through the deft pens of legislative wordsmiths, give tobacco manufacturers immunity without mentioning the word "tobacco." (The New Jersey law has seriously wounded *Cipillone v. Liggett*, a case many tobacco foes once considered their best hope.) At least ten other state legislatures are considering similar measures, as is the U.S. House of Representatives. At this pace, it won't be long before tobacco companies enjoy the kind of immunity usually reserved for Mafia informants.

Kool plaintiffs

California's new law comes at a convenient time for tobacco companies. While they beat back a wave of lawsuits in the '50s and '60s, a second wave is about to hit. One hundred twenty-five suits are pending around the country. Not exactly a brushfire of litigation considering that 320,000 Americans die of smoking-related deaths each year. Indeed, as tobacco company spokesmen love to point out, no plaintiff has ever collected a penny in judgment or settlement from a liability suit against a tobacco company. And appeals courts have ruled that those familiar and, for years, vague warnings on cigarette packages—the ones which tobacco companies fought and maintain are erroneous—actually shield the likes of R.J. Reynolds from "failure to warn" claims. But these new suits have several advantages. For instance, courts now let plaintiffs' lawyers share documents dug out of tobacco company files, a privilege that has slashed the cost of bringing suit.

Most important, victims' lawyers have an argument that might even sway judges and jurors who believe that smokers have only themselves to blame. Tobacco is a narcotic. Those who don't smoke can't grasp the desperation of a hard-core smoker who has tried—and failed again and again—to quit. They assume those who can't quit lack the desire. This is a cruel misunderstanding of addiction. Forty-eight percent of lung cancer victims who survive surgery begin smoking again.

Few of those who started smoking in the '40s and '50s, before the surgeon general's message began appearing on cigarette packages, could have been aware of the dangers; nor should their claims be ignored because they couldn't quit after they learned of the federal warnings. Tobacco companies before the '60s, however, could or should have known about both the addictive and health dangers of their products—the standard by which we judge negligence in other industries.

A final factor in the plaintiffs' favor is sheer carnage. Tobacco is now known to cause 16 percent of all deaths in the U.S.—deaths from lung and larynx cancer, heart disease, circulatory disorders, pneumonia, influenza, bronchitis, emphysema, and chronic airway obstruction, not to mention deaths of infants whose mothers smoked while pregnant and of non-smokers through passive smoking.

Of course, no one's comfortable with the idea of every Kool smoker filing suit. Nor is anyone arguing that smokers be absolved of all responsibility for their suffering. The point is that tobacco companies share that responsibility. But while thousands of smokers pay with their lives, the companies have yet to pay a dime. Whether the court is the best place to allocate blame and provide compensation would seem to be a question worth puffing on for a while. But not, apparently, in California. The issue was not debated in legislative hearings or considered on the opinion pages of newspapers or placed on the ballot and put before the voters. Instead, it was part of a

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At this pace, it won't be long before tobacco companies enjoy the kind of immunity usually reserved for Mafia informants.

complicated bill written by lobbyists over won-ton soup and ushered though the legislature in a single evening.

White knight burned

California's Liability Wars have a rich history in which the tobacco industry, like a profiteer, parlayed a small role into immense advantage. The main players were the state's doctors, trial lawyers, insurance companies, manufacturers, municipalities, and consumer groups. Their lobbying warfare dates back at least to 1975, the year the California Medical Association, over the protests of the California Trial Lawyers Association, persuaded the legislature to cap medical malpractice judgments and the size of trial lawyers' contingency fees, the percentage of the award they keep as compensation. Jealous of the doctors' victory, the state's insurance companies, manufacturers, and others fought to win similar protections. Civil courts, they argued, were out of control, granting too many exorbitant awards, thereby driving up the cost of insurance and putting a damper on the economy.

But for the next 12 years, those clamoring for "liability reform" were blocked. The trial lawyers, for obvious reasons, had no interest in seeing limits on damage awards and their own fees. The insurance companies, manufacturers, and their allies had to spread their considerable campaign contributions if they were to advance bills. The trial lawyers, however, could thwart those advances simply by targeting their contributions to key leaders of the Democrat-controlled legislature, especially Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, himself a trial lawyer. Lawyers, in fact, make up about 20 percent of the California legislature.

A natural affinity, and a key alliance, also existed between the trial lawyers and influential consumer groups. Ralph Nader and others maintained that big-ticket liability awards were more than just; they served as essential prods for insuring responsible behavior on the part of corporations, governments, and professionals. Consumer advocates blamed the high cost of insurance on the insurance industry. The alliance with trial lawyers was partly tactical—they had the money and clout consumer groups needed to get anywhere with the legislature. But it was also partly instinctive. Harvard law school educated Nader and his consumer advocate allies in California tended to picture trial attorneys as white knights, champions of the weak and victimized, even to the point of tolerating some of their excesses. The Naderites would get burned for their loyalties, and become furious when trial lawyers sold out the rights of tobacco victims in return for higher medical malpractice fees.

Defeated in the legislature, the alliance of insurance companies and manufacturers turned to the voters. In 1986, they used California's easy-to-assemble initiative laws to launch Proposition 51, the "Deep Pockets" initiative. It attempted to end the court's practice of making the wealthy defendant pay the lion's share of a damage award, even when other defendants in the case are more responsible. These wealthy defendants, voters were told in slick TV ads, were often their local governments shelling out tax dollars. Trial lawyers and consumer groups countered with their own ads, but Proposition 51 passed anyway.

The initiative's success emboldened the liability reform coalition. In March, 1987, they put a gun to the head of the legislature: if it refused to act then the coalition would go to the voters again in 1988. "We want to send a clear message that more [liability] reform is necessary," California Chamber of Commerce President Kirk West told reporters.

The reforms demanded by the coalition didn't mention tobacco per se. They did, however, insulate manufacturers of "inherently dangerous" products from law suits. "The concept of removing liability for tobacco manufacturers was part of our efforts from the beginning," says Frank

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Schubert, executive director of something called the Association for California Tort Reform (ACTR). With a name that sounds like a citizens action group, ACTR really functions as a political front for most of the economic interests that would benefit from liability restrictions: from banks, insurance firms, and grocery chains to product manufacturers—including R.J. Reynolds and Phillip Morris.

The trial lawyers and consumer movement, battered by Proposition 51, counterattacked. First, they pointed out that the insurance rate reductions promised by the Proposition 51 coalition never occurred—rates in fact were still on the rise. Second, they sponsored a reform package of their own. Their "insurance reform" legislation proposed ending the industry's exemption from state antitrust laws. Third, they marshalled their forces in the legislature to crush liability reform bills. Adding—ahem—insult to injury, they then lured away their opponent's political consultant, Woodward & McDowell, the firm that won the Proposition 51 fight. Finally, the trial lawyers and consumer groups flew in Ralph Nader on the anniversary of Proposition 51 and let it be known that they too would sponsor an initiative if the legislature didn't pass insurance reform in '87. "I want to assure you that our side does not play defensive ball," barked Nader.

The threat of "dueling initiatives" led to the table at Frank Fat's. Neither side wanted to spend the $15 to $30 million the initiative campaigns would cost. Both sides had polls showing strong support for their initiatives. (People apparently hated lawyers as much as insurance companies.) But if the Golden State's voters had the audacity to approve the anti-trial lawyer *and* the anti-insurance initiative, it would end California lobbying as we now know it. The working metaphor in Sacramento was Mutually Assured Destruction, each side armed with nuclear-tipped initiatives.

Arms control was in the hands of the California legislature, which was hardly united. Having tossed out liability reform in the spring, it spent the summer of '87 debating and then killing insurance reform. The denizens of Sacramento have another useful phrase for this situation: "lobby-lock." "We can block legislation, and the others can block ours," Gary Gwilliam, president-elect of the California Trial Lawyer's Association, told Sigrid Bathen of the San Francisco *Recorder*.

Curiously, legislators have a strong incentive in perpetuating this lobby-lock. "It lets them collect campaign contributions from both sides," explains *Sacramento Bee* political columnist Dan Walters. Liability reform/insurance reform efforts are what they call "juice" bills. Resolve the differences, and campaign funds slow to a trickle.

The prospect of an initiative war, however, stirred nuclear nightmares for California legislators. A 1988 initiative fight on TV would remind voters that incumbent lawmakers, especially Democratic leaders, weren't doing their jobs. Even worse, the trial lawyers would have to spend so much money on initiative campaign ads that there would be little left for contributions to Democratic candidates.

Knowing this, Democratic leaders in late August helped the trial lawyers devise what future historians of tobacco liability might call the legislative equivalent of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact: a separate peace with California municipalities. Lobbyists for cities and counties promised to drop their support for the threatened liability initiative in return for the trial lawyers' backing a package of bills that would give liability protections to local governments and officials. That brought a weakened liability reform coalition to the table at Frank Fat's and paved the way for the selling out of victims' rights.

Elegant sleaze

Enter tobacco. Until then, tobacco interests had made their presence felt as members of the Association for California Tort Reform. But during the two-week negotiations before the end of the legislative session, two lawyers from Covington & Burling, the Washington, D.C. firm that represents the tobacco industry's lobbying arm, the Tobacco Institute, flew into town. The two were there to "help with the language" of the bill, recalls ACTR's Schubert. Their soothing expertise, Will Glennon, lobbyist for the trial lawyers, told *Liability Week* newsletter, helped in "overcoming our paranoia" about any public backlash against the provision protecting makers of tobacco and other "inherently unsafe" products. The provision, says Ian "Buddy" Herzog, a player on the trial lawyers' negotiating team, was "a very important negotiating item to certain segments of the Prop. 51 coalition, basically the alcohol and tobacco industries."

The manufacturers and other liability reformers would have liked the product liability section to have been worded in general terms so that the courts would interpret it to cover as many products as possible—Cuisinarts and Chevys as

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Trial lawyers sold out the rights of tobacco victims in return for higher malpractice fees.

well as Camels and Chivas. The trial lawyers insisted the wording be specific, lest every avenue of wealth be blocked. The compromise? The law as it now reads grants immunity to companies making and selling "inherently unsafe" products "*such as* sugar, castor oil, alcohol, tobacco, and butter" (emphasis added). By writing "such as" the courtroom door was seemingly left open to suits against other products.

Some legal scholarship supports lumping tobacco with Land O' Lakes, but context, as the feminists say, is everything. In effect, California law now deems tobacco as dangerous as butter, though the dairy, sugar, and castor oil industries apparently don't seem to feel the threat of runaway lawsuits enough to jet lobbyists to California. In fact, after the law was passed, the Tobacco Products Liability Project, a Boston-based antitobacco group, got a phone call from a Washington, D.C. sugar industry association asking what the California law was all about. David Gidmark, editor of *Tobacco on Trial* newsletter, asked a spokeswoman for Kalipharma, a major castor oil distributor, if the industry was breathing a little easier since the law's passage. "I haven't heard anything about it," she replied.

This law is going to be slim pickin's for strict constructionists. Does it apply to power tools because they're "inherently unsafe;" or is a circular saw excluded because it's not "ingestible" like butter and other threatening substances cited in the act? Courts answer questions based on legislative intent. But elected officials didn't write this law or seriously debate it. Lobbyists did. And even they disagree. Vagueness, in fact, was their intent. "Ambiguity often becomes the basis of compromise," Gene Livingstone, chairman of the Association for California Tort Reform, told the *Los Angeles Times*. Short of taking depositions from the busboys at Frank Fat's, judges are pretty much on their own.

One final item almost derailed the negotiations but was ironed out that night at Frank Fat's with some help from Speaker Brown. The trial lawyers, as a price for abandoning their old loyalties, were demanding that the doctors give up the liability protections they earned in 1975: caps on damages and limits on attorneys' fees. Outraged, the doctors threatened to abandon the talks. Brown, shuttling between tables, brokered a compromise: the caps on damages stayed, but the lawyers would get a bigger percentage of the awards. There's an elegant sleaziness here if you peel back the layers. Here are doctors (protectors of our health) joining lawyers (defenders of the wronged) to protect tobacco companies (makers of the most deadly product on the market) by taking away from malpractice victims part of the damages courts extract from doctors and giving it to the lawyers.

Justifications

"There is no way to justify this," insisted Snyder of the Consumers Union a few days after the Napkin Bill became law. That, however, didn't keep legislators and lobbyists from trying. Indeed, the California "compromise" can be said to have had one small, worthwhile result: it has provided mankind with a living laboratory for studying the phenomenon of political self-justification.

►**Unsightly Spending**: Legislators rationalized their support for the compromise as a way to spare California the unseemly hemorrhage of special interest political money that would have occurred in an initiative fight. "In some respects it was an exercise in legislative triage to try to avoid the very expensive initiative wars," says Sen. Lockyer. Legislators, however, didn't complain when the warring lobbies were showering them with millions in campaign contributions. Only

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when it looked like $15 million to $30 million in potential contributions were about to disappear in a direct appeal to the voters, did lawmakers suddenly start sounding like they worked for Common Cause.

►**Dump the losers**: An equally common rationalization was that nothing was lost because tobacco product liability suits are hopeless. "What we tried to do" in choosing to give immunity to tobacco companies, explains Sen. Lockyer (who says he is a "militant antismoker"), "is look for cases where plaintiffs don't win." The trial lawyers echo this one. "This is not the kind of case lawyers in the product field who really know what they are doing are going to take and move with and invest in," claimed CTLA president Browne Greene. "They don't win."

There's a chilling honesty to Greene's words. Trial attorneys are usually short tempered with anyone who suggests they're in it only for the money. Trial law, they'll tell you, isn't "ambulance chasing;" it's a noble calling that defends ordinary citizens trampled on by greedy corporations. If so, then there can hardly be a more noble cause than taking on the tobacco industry. Name a larger group of unrecompensed victims. If the chance of winning is slim, it only proves the secondary importance of money to the lawyers who pursue it. It doesn't mean the cause is lost. Early claims against Johns-Mansville and asbestos manufacturers didn't win either. Indeed, an article entitled "Smoke Alarms," which ran in the October issue of the California Bar Association's magazine, *California Lawyer*, detailed promising strategies of plaintiffs' lawyers in tobacco liability cases and wondered if we might be entering "the season of truth in the war against tobacco." California's trial lawyers abandoned cigarette victims, not because they couldn't help them, but because the victims weren't easy money.

►**Abolish the common law**: Imagine you are Jay Michael, lobbyist for the California Medical Association. You're well aware that tobacco is the nation's leading cause of preventable death. Yet you've recently helped fashion a law that indemnifies the tobacco industry from liability suits, in exchange for a guarantee from trial lawyers that laws limiting malpractice judgments won't be politically challenged. A journalist asks you to explain yourself. What can you say?

First, you express your longstanding support for the cause of liability reform. Then you confide how "troubled" you were by the tobacco provision and spend about the next five minutes detailing the many efforts of the medical profession to reduce the threat of smoking. Finally, you offer an explanation that seems to absolve you of all responsibility. "What we did," you say, in a calm, explanatory voice, "is we took existing case law and made it statutory law. We think it's existing law anyway. A good case can be made that nothing has changed."

But of course something has changed. As any law professor will tell you, the common law's ability to evolve as it absorbs new arguments and changing circumstances is part of the beauty of American jurisprudence. "This Act freezes the law at a certain moment in time," complains Assemblyman Byron Sher, a Stanford law professor and one of the few legislators to vote against the bill. "Just because there haven't been any successful suits doesn't mean there won't be any in the future." This statutory freezing would be more defensible, adds Sher, had it not been drafted by unelected lobbyists and jammed through the legislative process in a matter of hours.

►**The image problem**: The most curious justification—if it can be called that—was that lawyers who take on tobacco law suits somehow give the whole trial law profession a "bad reputation"—as opposed to, say, chasing ambulances. "I personally don't think the case where a guy has been smoking three packs a day for 20 years—and then sues because he gets lung cancer—belongs in the court," remarked Glennon of the CTLA. "Those are the lawsuits that make the public say 'those damned trial lawyers.'"

Perhaps the public really does harbor hatred in its heart toward tobacco plaintiff lawyers. On the other hand, perhaps it views them as the more nobly motivated members of the bar. Indeed, only a month after the governor signed the Civil Liability Bill, NBC ran an episode of "L.A. Law" in which one of the show's idealistic heartthrobs, young Michael Kuzak, takes on a tobacco liability case. He loses, but heroically, to a cadre of tobacco company attorneys who all look like the fascist frat man Doug Neidermeir in *Animal House*. Anyway, if the trial lawyers were worried about their image, the last thing they should have done was trade away the rights of victims for higher attorney's fees.

►**Rampant democracy**: But the winner of The Most Vehemently Maintained Justification

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Award has to be The Alternative Was Worse Argument. "The initiatives contemplated were far more drastic from a consumer's perspective than the bill," says Sen. Lockyer. The trial lawyers were more apocalyptic: "If we hadn't made the deal," said CTLA negotiator Herzog, "there wouldn't have been any civil justice system left in California."

The initiatives were a danger, but even some trial lawyers admitted they weren't that bad. Former president of the California Trial Lawyer's Association, Herb Hafif, called the initiatives "a threat, but one which I think is somewhat exaggerated." Actually, about the only major restrictions on liability laws contemplated in the initiatives that the trial lawyers didn't give away in the bargain were various caps on damages. (The lawyers would argue that contingency fee limits were also blows to victims' rights.)

It didn't have to come to an initiative war. The success of last year's tax reform in Washington put the lie to the notion that representative bodies can't break out of special interest gridlocks to produce great legislation. But even an initiative war would have been preferable to the special interest "compromise" rubber-stamped by the California legislature. "In effect, what the politicians and lobbyists are saying is they're afraid of democracy," says Snyder of the Consumers Union. "We were willing to go into the next liability reform battle. The public would have seen how their interests would have been impacted by these liability reform proposals. I think we would have won." The public might or might not have voted to cap awards or grant immunity to tobacco firms; either way, the decision would have been made by 13 million California voters, not eight guys in a Chinese restaurant. □

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY Journalism Award

for September 1987 is presented to

Athelia Knight
The Washington Post

Knight's series chronicles the afflictions facing a typical urban school, McKinley High in Washington, D.C. After spending an entire school year attending classes and faculty meetings, she discovered that the culture of McKinley hinders academic excellence. Most students are ashamed to do well. Many teachers won't insure discipline (like keeping track of student attendance) because it makes them do more work. There are heroes at McKinley, however. Basketball star Anthony Tucker avoids dabbling in drugs and crime to emerge mature, articulate, and Georgetown-bound. Instead of being a reclusive administrator, Principal Bettye Topps fights for standards and values by talking with—and often chastizing—students, teachers, and parents.

James Sterngold
The New York Times

The buyout of Beatrice Companies—makers of everything from La Choy chow mein to Playtex bras—is the story of how Wall Street firms make millions of dollars by shuffling assets and producing no economic growth. Kolberg, Kravis, a buyout firm, used relatively little of its own money to buy the $6.2 billion food giant. The firm and its partners then sold off Beatrice's divisions at a profit of $3 billion. Beatrice executives didn't exactly suffer, just because their 83-year-old company was being dismembered. For agreeing to the deal they were given $22 million in golden parachutes. Of course, where there's money, there are consultants. As Sterngold shows, the investment firms of Salomon Brothers and Lazard Freres & Co. each earned $8 million—just for offering Beatrice strategic advice.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for stories published or aired in October will be announced in the January issue. Nominations for stories published or aired in November will close December 15. The winner will be announced in the February issue. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

ROSA PARKS REMEMBERED

The American Civil Liberties Union has filed suit against New Orleans to stop the city from allowing priests and nuns to ride public transportation for free.

TECHNOLOGICAL MIRACLE

The label on Swanson fried chicken reads: "Swanson Plump and Juicy gives consumers what they asked for—recognizable pieces of chicken."

THE TIDE HAS TURNED

Lakewood Forest Products, Ltd. of Hibbing, Minnesota has begun exporting chopsticks to Japan.

●

AND THEIR VISA CARD IS EXEMPTED FROM GRAMM-RUDMAN.

Senator Tim Wirth of Colorado is urging the establishment of a bank for members of the Senate comparable to the one in the House which offers free checking and no penalty for bad checks.

WELL, MR. STENGEL, I JUST WANT TO CONGRATULATE YOU AND YOUR TEAMMATES.

After the fifth game of the World Series, President Reagan called St. Louis Cardinals manager Whitey Herzog to congratulate him on winning the World Series. In fact, the series was not yet over and the Cardinals would go on to lose it.

IN ACT II HE BREAKS INTO THOMAS JEFFERSON'S PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE

In a recent amateur play production in Santa Fe, New Mexico, John Ehrlichman was cast as John Hancock.

D2 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1987 THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON WAYS

The Reagans Mourn the Death of Edith Davis

By Donnie Radcliffe
Washington Post Staff Writer

Nancy Reagan learned of her mother's death yesterday from President Reagan, who left the Oval Office at 3 p.m. to tell her personally.

"Later the president sat on the edge of the bed with her, and she was going through pictures of her mother, telling him, 'This is when she said this, this is when she did that,' " said Elaine Crispen, press secretary to the first lady, who only Thursday returned to the White House after surgery for breast cancer five days earlier.

"She's taking it very hard," said Crispen. "She and her mother were very, very close. Not a day went by that Mrs. Reagan didn't call her."

The first lady last saw Edith Luckett Davis, 91, on Aug. 13, on a

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ron Reagan in September, as guest host of "Good Morning America."

Adelman, director of the Arms

something triggered the Soviets' "mistrust—there's mistrust on both sides." He said he's due in Moscow next month when he hopes to see Gorbachev and "I hope I can do something."

=

Liz Carpenter says she clean forgot she was 67 when she agreed to be a media star and social butterfly. But today, 121 talk shows and dozens of Hollywood, Chicago and New York parties after the June 22 launching of her latest book, "Getting Better All the Time," she can't keep up with herself.

"If there's a copy of my book around that I haven't personally autographed, I want to see it," Carpenter said yesterday from Texas.

She'll have that chance on Sunday at the Texas State Society when she and author Larry L. King

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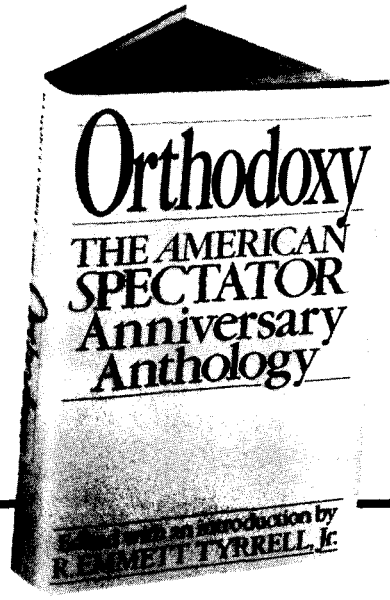

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—Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

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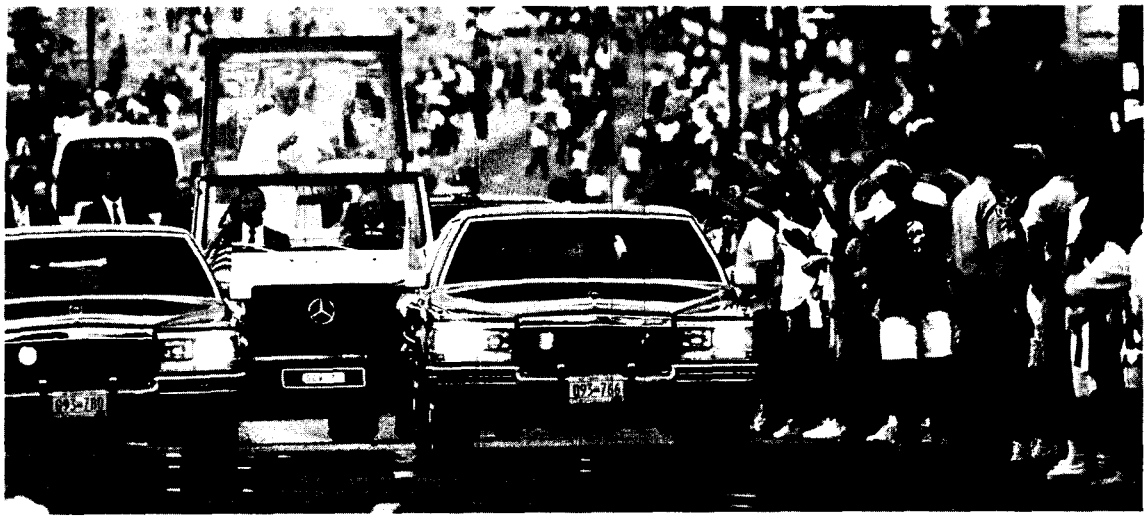
The Pope Came to South Carolina

Unfortunately, so did the Yankee press



by David Moniz

Granted, Columbia, South Carolina is no gleaming icon of the New South, but with a half-million people, a state capitol, a fine arts center, and a symphony, it's getting to be a pretty cosmopolitan place.

Pope John Paul II seemed to like it pretty well, too, when he visited a few months ago as part of his nationwide tour. He gave us a blessing and said "your famous southern hospitality has made me feel right at home."

Imagine our surprise then, when we saw the stories replayed for us the next day in the pages of the northern press.

"This is no place for a pope," thundered the *Philadelphia Daily News*. "This is the land of the born-again, Bible-thumping Southern Baptist who finds his religion every Sunday in a whitewashed cinderblock church amid the scrub pines next to the trailer park."

The *Los Angeles Times* continued in a similar vein:

"There were souls to be saved on the sweltering sidewalks of this southern city Friday, of that sad fact of the human condition there was little debate. . . .On virtually every street corner where the Pope and his entourage were to pass in procession, Bible students, street preachers, an occasional Roman Catholic, and clergy of various cloths could be found in contentious coexistence, fervently attempting to proselytize one another and anyone else they could find, be it a police officer, shopkeeper, or papal souvenir vendor."

Since I grew up outside the South, I understand where these ideas come from. When I came to Columbia from Washington, D.C., I had those same Neil Young lyrics ringing in my head—you know, "banjos playing through the broken glass" and all that stuff. I was ready to see white hoods, fat sheriffs, black sharecroppers in overalls, grits dripping off the locals' chins. And being Catholic didn't ease my worries about racial intolerance.

But I've been here seven years now and haven't seen a good lynching yet. Ironically, the Pope's trip to the South did conjure up Old Confederate ghosts—but mostly in the minds of out-of-town reporters.

The *No-Place-For-A-Pope Daily News* continued:

"Pope John Paul II went there anyway yesterday, promoting ecumenism, unity among Christians, hoping to find a place for Catholics in the Bible Belt. His job would have been easier if more people believed Catholics are really Christians.

"Dave Tucker sure doesn't.

David Moniz is a reporter for The Columbia Record *in South Carolina.*

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"He came all the way from Greenville, halfway across the state, to hand out pamphlets calling the Pope the Antichrist."

The ecumenical meetings that got so much coverage here didn't seem to sell too well elsewhere. Consider *Newsweek*'s in-depth paragraph about the trip: "White fundamentalists boycotted an ecumenical service in Columbia, incensed that the pope of Rome had invaded their Bible Belt turf, they denounced him as the Antichrist."

Before CBS got around to mentioning the ecumenical meetings, it gave plenty of airtime to the Reverend Bob Jones, whose frothings carry about as much weight here as they do in Cincinnati. The *Chicago Tribune* story led with Jones, letting folks in the Windy City know that Jones greeted the pope "with the same enthusiasm once reserved for the Boll Weevil."

If you're an out-of-town-reporter and you want to convince your editors that you really know your stuff, nothing works like a boll weevil in your lead. Try "problems as common as kudzu" if your cross-South tour takes you to North Carolina or "politics as spicy as their gumbo" in New Orleans. And be sure to find the looniest guy in town, the one with all the right props.

Like the born-again who sat in his pickup truck outside the University of South Carolina stadium, thundering about damnation. Television cameras bumped into one another, jockeying for position. My friend Doug Nye, media critic for *The Columbia Record*, couldn't believe it. "He's around the newspaper every other day," he said. "Everyone know's he's just an old coot, and yet they led the broadcast with this dodo." □

WHO'S WHO in the Administration

Colin Powell, the new national security adviser (see below), has the dubious distinction of being the man who sold **Frank Carlucci** on the Navy's conviction that we could escort the reflagged Kuwaiti tankers without increasing our forces in the Persian Gulf. This has turned out to be one of the more spectacular misestimates of an administration that has specialized in being wrong about national security matters.

Admiral **John Poindexter**'s "I don't recall" testimony is the subject of considerable hilarity among his former National Security Council associates. It seems that the admiral was quite vain about his excellent memory and that, in this respect at least, his vanity was justified.

The conservatives have a new enemy in the White House. **Tom Griscom**, the communications director, who is accused of softening **Ronald Reagan**'s right-wing rhetoric.

C. William Verity, the new secretary of commerce, wants to have **Robert W. Dean**, who is now at the National Security Council, as his undersecretary for export administration. But **Jake Garn**, the Utah senator who is the senior Republican on a key senate committee overseeing export policy and who feels the administration has been lax in letting the communists gain access to our technology secrets, is supporting **Paul Freedenberg**, who is an assistant secretary of commerce and was once a member of Garn's staff.

Wendy Gramm, who will probably be nominated to head the Commodity Futures Trading Commission by the time this issue appears on the stands, is the wife of conservative Senator **Phil Gramm** and is very unlikely to take a tough stand on the speculation in stock index futures that was a significant factor in the October stock market collapse.

As we have indicated, **James Miller**, the OMB director, is not a favorite of **Howard Baker**. *The Washington Post* has now gotten on the case and reports that one of its White House sources says of Miller, "He's ideologically correct but politically inept. He comes in late, doesn't seem up to speed, and beyond his talking points doesn't seem to know how to maneuver."

Our predictions last month about the fate of the nominations of **Kenneth Bergquist** and **James Burnley** should have contained the word "probably" instead of flatly asserting they would not be confirmed by the Senate. They should be rejected, but we are not certain that they will be.

In—*White House*: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs—**Colin Powell**. *Agriculture*: Assistant Secretary for the Office of Economics—**Ewan Wilson**. *Defense*: Secretary—**Frank Carlucci**. *Education*: Undersecretary—**Linus D. Wright**. *Energy*: Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy—**Theodore I. Garrish**. *Interior*: Undersecretary—**Earl E. Gjelde**. *Labor*: Secretary—**Anne Dore McLaughlin**. *Transportation*: Deputy Secretary—**Mimi Weyforth Dawson**. *Arms Control and Disarmament Agency*: Deputy Director—**Kathleen C. Bailey**. *Federal Trade Commission*: Commissioner—**Bradley P. Holmes**.

Out—*White House*: Special Assistant to the President and Director, Public Affairs—**Thomas F. Gibson**. *Defense*: Secretary—**Caspar Weinberger**. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works—**Robert K. Dawson**. *Energy*: Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy—**A. David Rossin**. *State*: Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs—**Douglas W. McMinn**. *Federal Highway Administration*: Administrator—**Ray A. Barnhart**.

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The Slum Behind the Sheraton

A Philippine struggle between Marcos loyalists, Marxist youth, and a woman with 2,000 eggs in her living room

by Jason DeParle

"Ask him if he eats rice," she said. "Ask him if he has a girlfriend. You ask him if he wants to marry a Filipina!"

The inquiry began outside a cooperative food store in the Manila slum district of Leveriza. As dusk fell on the neighborhood's slouching homes and busy alleys, Tita Comodaz sat in the storefront window, selling dried fish, sugar, and eggs. We had just met, and an excited neighbor was feeding her questions.

With each of my answers, the neighbor dissolved in laughter and planted a plump elbow in Tita's side. But Tita looked somber. After all, it was her house, and I was asking to move in.

Our introduction came through Sister Christine Tan, a Filipino nun who lives and works in Leveriza. She told Tita that I was looking for a family to live with and asked if she had room. If not, she said, just pass him on to someone else. "And don't cook him anything special," she said, walking away. "If he gets sick, too bad."

My conversation with Tita poked along for about two hours, slowed by the gaps in her English and the chasms in my Tagalog. Yes, I eat rice, I said. No, I'm not married. And I came to Leveriza, I explained, to try to learn what life there is like. (I tried to imagine a Filipino squatter serving up a similar explanation when arriving uninvited on the doorstep of, say, my parent's north Florida condominium.) Early that evening, over a plate of mungo beans and rice, Tita agreed to take me in.

For large portions of the next eight months, I slept on Tita's floor, shared her meals, and accompanied her and her neighbors to markets, churches, funerals, schools, Bible studies, and political rallies. I learned to stomach the feathers and yolk of incubated duck eggs, a local delicacy, and to stifle a squeal when mice skittered across the dinner table.

I got acquainted with the neighborhood's Marcos loyalists and communist cadres. But the person I got to know best was Tita, an unlikely activist whose politics had her keeping watch both on ballot boxes and on the co-op's eggs.

About a third of Manila's eight million people live in squatter areas like Leveriza. I wanted to learn something about their lives and the way they viewed their nation's grope towards democracy.

Jason DeParle, an editor of The Washington Monthly, *returned from Manila in September after spending a year there on a fellowship from The Henry Luce Foundation.*

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Leveriza

photo by Noli Yamsuan

A surprising diversity

Squatter areas can be found across most of Manila, ranging from a few displaced families to communities of tens of thousands. Only a few American-style subdivisions, with guards and gates, have escaped the intrusion. Elsewhere, shanties even dot the periphery of expensive hotels and walled residential compounds. At an art exhibition soon after my arrival I was introduced as someone who worked with squatters. "Oh good," said one wealthy landlord. "I wonder if you can help us get rid of ours."

These squatter settlements would pose difficult problems for even the best-intentioned government. And during his 21 years of rule, President Ferdinand Marcos seldom had the best intentions. While the Marcoses poured public money into the high-rise hotels and casinos that line Manila Bay, the only government projects offered to most squatters were the whitewashed walls that obscured them from sight. Along Manila's South Superhighway, the walls have begun to crumble, leaving incongruous cement arches to frame the sprawl of shanties.

The city's most notorious encampment is its main trash dump, Smokey Mountain in Tondo—named for its constantly smoldering acres, which span perhaps 25 football fields. About 15,000 people reside upon the heap of refuse and eke out a living by picking from the muck bones, bottle caps, and other salvageable scraps. Squatters in every sense, they don't even own their trash but relinquish it to middleman concessionaires who operate a lucrative industry in partnership with local politicians.

On Easter Sunday, I attended a sunrise service there. In the predawn darkness, two candle-bearing processions snaked down the dump's broad slopes, carrying statues. One held the veiled Virgin and the other carried the crucified Christ. They met under a canopy where a young girl dressed as an angel lifted the mourning Virgin's veil. Fireworks exploded and the crowd cheered: Christ has Risen! Christ has Risen! My companion, a Filipino newspaper publisher, began to cheer as well. "Look at this," he said. "Faulkner was right: 'Man will not merely endure; he will prevail!'"

In a subsequent homily, the parish priest reminded the scavengers that Calvary, too, was a garbage dump. Living on Smokey Mountain, he said, gave them special knowledge of the agony Christ suffered and the joy His redemption promised. A small statue beside the chapel depicted Jesus as a scavenger, toting a wicker basket full of scraps.

While Smokey Mountain can be seen and smelled from afar, Leveriza (LEH-ver-EE-sah) lies tucked away like a secret in the city center. Except for those who live there, few passing nearby would guess its existence. I certainly didn't until I met Sister Christine, though during my first few months in Manila I often rode the elevated train that passes on its eastern edge and shopped in the mall that borders to the west. When I swam

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in the pool at the high-rise Sheraton adjacent to the mall, like most foreign visitors I remained oblivious to the neighboring geography. The two-story buildings that line the streets along Leveriza's perimeter give no hint of the chaotic maze within, home to 18,000 people.

Leveriza is one of the city's oldest squatter areas. Some of Tita's neighbors could recall childhoods spent there before World War II, when it was still a mudflat. In the early 1980s, a minor upgrading program financed by the World Bank cemented some of the alleys and added some drainage. Though the drains easily clog and the runoff spills into homes sunk lower than the sidewalk, Leveriza residents still appreciate the project. My intentionally vague questions about how Leveriza had changed in the course of their lives usually brought a very specific response: it's less muddy now.

It isn't less crowded. A typical morning would find the alleys outside Tita's home filled with women squatting over basins of dirty clothes, twisting and beating them clean. Unemployed teens and men spent hours in the alleys playing a game that resembles pool, using checkers instead of balls. Some simply sat, petting fighting cocks. In front of their homes, women set up stands where they fried fish and bananas and stirred pots of vegetables.

Each morning, a Sikh trader and moneylender would pass from home to home. At Tita's he collected 15 cents a day as payment on an $11 debt she owed after buying some pants; she could have bought the same pair for $7 in the market if she'd had the money all at once. People in Leveriza said the Sikh smelled bad and called him the "BOOM-bye," a Filipinized pronunciation of Bombay, where they said he came from. As in most of the Philippines, children far outnumbered the rest of us. A few years ago a doctor examined several hundred Leveriza children as part of a feeding program. She found about 80 percent of them malnourished.

The uniform chaos within Leveriza can disguise what is actually a surprising amount of economic diversity. Some Leveriza residents live in cement block homes with running water, comfortable couches, and even telephones. Others live in one-room scrapwood shacks, six or eight to the room. A few even lack electricity. While about 90 percent of Leveriza residents have televisions, fewer than a third have toilets, a pattern typical of Manila's poorer neighborhoods. Those without plumbing defecate on newspapers and toss them into a nearby creek, jokingly referring to the discarded bundles as "flying saucers."

Tita lived in one of Leveriza's nicer homes. When I arrived, her husband, Emmet, was in the final months of a two-year work contract in Saudi Arabia. He earned $350 a month cleaning a swimming pool at a Jeddah sports club, triple what his previous wage had been. His earnings had allowed him to expand his home from the single room he bought 20 years earlier to a sturdy four-room structure. One room formed a separate apartment, rented to Tita's cousin for $15 a month. Tita, her two daughters, and her two youngest sons slept in an upstairs bedroom. Another four of us—including a nephew and a brother-in-law who'd come to Manila from the provinces to study—slept on the living room floor. Tita kept a fluorescent light burning all night in the kitchen to scare away the rats, a tactic that met with only limited success. The house contained a toilet.

Like Emmet, who returned from Saudi Arabia during my stay, some people in Leveriza had regular jobs. They worked as drivers, carpenters, cooks, and cops. One of Tita's neighbors swept the floors at the presidential palace. Another gave tennis lessons. At the other end of the scale, one section of Leveriza consisted mostly of streetcleaners and scavengers. I joined one of them, 49-year-old Mariano Ordista, on one of his nightly forays. We headed out at dusk, with Mariano's eight-year-old son, Bong, in proud accompaniment, happy as any son for the chance to join his father at work. We stopped a few

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photo by Noli Yamsuan

blocks away at Gotamko Street, under a sign that said "Don't throw your garbage here" and threatened violators with a $50 fine.

As harsh as Leveriza's poverty could be, it did not seem to have produced a correspondingly demeaned or desperate population. I found less violence than I expected, and less than I had seen in blighted areas of New Orleans when I worked there as a reporter. The same could be said for family disintegration, drug addiction, and general hopelessness.

"What can you say about our place?" was the standard Leveriza refrain. I'd heard that question posed before in housing projects in New Orleans. But in New Orleans, the tenants expected a shocked and sympathetic reply. They wanted to hear me voice outrage at their crumbling ceilings and broken windows, or the sewage stopped up in their courtyards, conditions that a racial and numerical minority suffered in the midst of a prosperous society. In Manila, where poverty was the norm, the question came with expectations of a wholly different sort. In Leveriza, Tita and most of her neighbors would be offended to hear their neighborhood demeaned. They wanted to be told that their homes were nice.

An internally desperate life

At age 41, Tita is the oldest of 11 children born to a tenant farmer in the nearby province of Cavite. She quit school after grade six and arrived in Manila at age 16 to work in a glove factory. She sent half of her $1-a-day salary back home to help keep her younger siblings in school. Shortly after arriving in Manila, Tita moved to Leveriza and began sharing a room with a relative.

Like many rural migrations, Tita's was an unhappy one. Raised in the fresh air of coffee groves, she suddenly lived amidst garbage and mud. Raised among the familiar faces of her extended clan, she now lived in a world that swirled with strangers. As Tita and her neighbors tell it, she succumbed to a life of isolation and bouts of anemia. Her marriage at age 20, and the birth of three children in four years, only compounded her sense of burden and completed her withdrawal. She remained that way for the first decade or so of her marriage, living a dutiful though internally desperate life. "I was very talkless," she said.

When I arrived years later things had changed. To be sure, much of her life remained difficult. As Tita and I took stock of one another in the first mutually nervous weeks of my stay, her life seemed to me an endless succession of domestic chores. I was still stretched out on the floor beneath a mosquito net when she rose at 5:00 a.m. to begin cooking the breakfast rice. And sometimes I'd be back under the mosquito net at midnight and she'd still be wrestling dirty laundry in the bathroom. With Emmet overseas, Tita was left alone to cook and care for her five children, aged seven to 19. Mealtimes were an anxious exercise for us both, as I struggled to convince her that nothing could possibly excite my palate more than the fish head eyeing me from my plate.

But despite the storm of household chores, other interests now animated her life as well. She was always marching off to neighborhood meetings and prayer sessions with people who valued her counsel and companionship. Moreover, she showed a keen interest in monitoring her nation's turbulent politics. She was constantly grabbing for a newspaper, and the blare of Tagalog news radio usually filled the living room before dawn. A similar public mindedness seemed to characterize many of her neighbors.

Eventually I came to understand that this evolution in Tita's life—from isolation towards engagement, from submission towards assertion—didn't happen by accident. Much of the credit belonged to Leveriza's Basic Christian Communities, small groups that sponsor religious, economic, and political projects. There are between 3,000 and 5,000 estimated BCCs in the

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Philippines and they have sparked much controversy, nationally and locally. In Leveriza these groups have banded together into an organization known by its Tagalog name, Alay Kapwa, or "help your neighbor."

Sisters among squatters

The organizing work in Leveriza began in 1979 with the arrival of Sister Christine and several other nuns. Sister Christine, who is 56 years old, comes from a wealthy and prominent Filipino family. An uncle served as president of the University of the Philippines, and her brother currently presides over the government's Bureau of Internal Revenue. When President Corazon Aquino selected 50 people last year to write the new Philippine Constitution, Sister Christine was among them.

As Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Sister Christine and the other Leveriza nuns had been trained in traditional social work while studying at a Los Angeles convent in the '50s. With the arrival of liberation theology in the '60s, and martial law in 1972, they became increasingly involved in human rights advocacy, labor activism, and other political activities.

It was the declaration of martial law that brought Sister Christine to national prominence, in her role as head of the country's association of mother superiors. While the Philippine clergy as a whole responded quietly to martial law—the bishops' conference, for example, counseled restraint—Sister Christine assailed Marcos's rule with a stinging tongue.

She said her agitation within the conservative Philippine church brought her into conflict with the papal nuncio, who conveyed orders from the Vatican that she not seek reelection to her leadership post. ("He's a crook," she told me, with characteristic indelicacy.) Off she marched to Leveriza instead.

In seeking to build a BCC, Sister Christine was following a trend that had spread across the Philippines and Latin America after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. The council challenged the church to open itself to the poor, and many saw BCCs as the way to do it. The models for such communities of worship and action were as old as Christianity itself, dating back to the first gatherings of Jesus's apostles. But the differences with the established church were large.

While the traditional Philippine church was built upon deference to clerical authority, the

photo by Charles Steiner-J.B. Pictures

BCCs stressed community participation. While the traditional church stressed piety and promised heavenly rewards, the BCCs sought justice in this world. Their goal, they said, was to transform the poor from recipients of charity to agents of change.

The nuns' arrival in Leveriza was greeted with suspicion in many quarters. The parish priest viewed Sister Christine's politics and religion with alarm. Marcos's barangay captains (a Philippine version of the ward leader), also eyed the organization warily, viewing it as a potential tool of leftist subversion. One captain raided a Bible study, confiscated its religious comics, and threatened to arrest the participants.

The concerns about leftist infiltration weren't entirely groundless. Elsewhere in the Philippines, particularly in rural areas of Negros and Mindanao, communists have been able to infiltrate the BCCs and use them for their purposes. In Leveriza, too, the threat of communist infiltration was one the nuns would have to face.

But the nuns' first obstacle was the apathy and suspicion of the people themselves. Some had never spoken to a nun before. They wondered why women of such wealth and privilege would choose to live in Leveriza. They doubted the nuns would last.

"We were high class and we didn't really know what to do," said Sister Christine, who was so clumsy in her country's native Tagalog that she read movie star magazines to practice. The organizing went slowly. Most of the nuns kept outside

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jobs in what they call "social justice" organizations and devoted nights and weekends to the many tedious meetings upon which organizations like Alay Kapwa are built. Only Sister Vincent plunged in full time, filling her days with Bible studies, song groups, feeding programs, health projects, and schemes to bring the neighborhood more water taps and toilets. She taught Leveriza women political songs and brought them to serenade striking workers on the picket lines, little by little watching their enthusiasm spread.

Like most political activity in the Philippines, the organizing in Leveriza took on a new intensity in 1983 with the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino. His death politicized Filipinos of all social classes. In Makati, Manila's financial district, the middle-class employees of major corporations began to join anti-government rallies previously attended mostly by students. Eventually many of the top officers of those corporations began joining the demonstrations too. In Leveriza, Alay Kapwa members also joined the protests and then the political campaign that brought Corazon Aquino to power.

Interestingly, the Aquino assassination also erected an odd footbridge between Leveriza's anonymous squatters and a few newly awakened members of the Makati business elite. During my stay the wives of both the finance minister and health minister occasionally stopped by Tita's house to drop off rummage goods or donate books to the Alay Kapwa library. For a few, like Butch Santos, the involvement in Leveriza has gone deeper.

The 43-year-old graduate of Columbia business school is the second-ranking corporate officer at a bank of 1,100 employees owned by his family. He lives in Forbes Park, one of Manila's most exclusive suburban enclaves, in a house with five maids. But since meeting Sister Christine at a rally four years ago, Butch has spent almost every Saturday and Sunday in Leveriza, organizing economic projects like soap-making or cigarette-selling and leading Bible studies. On occasion he's hosted Alay Kapwa gatherings at his Forbes Park home. One night, after I'd joined some Alay Kapwa women at a funeral service for a former Filipino senator, Butch invited us back to the senator's home—the equivalent, perhaps, of a tenants' group from a Boston housing project joining the Kennedys at their compound in Hyannisport.

Today, Alay Kapwa contains about 500 members, mostly women, who run a dizzying array of projects. They operate cooperative food stores and a health clinic, distribute subsidized rice, sew napkins for export to Japan, and offer scholarships to Leveriza youth. They attend rallies and campaign for candidates. But the organization's true impact can't be measured in the number of pounds of rice distributed or song contests sponsored. The real work of Alay Kapwa, as articulated by its members, lies in the transformation of personal values, from apathy to citizenship.

Devotion to the public good is admirable anywhere, but even more so in the Philippines, where public life has rarely been viewed as anything more than an avenue for self-enrichment, and loyalties have belonged to family, not neighbors or countrymen. The Marcoses may have added their special panache to the art of self-enrichment, and pushed it to new limits, but they didn't invent it.

"If you cannot permit abuses, you must at least tolerate them," former Senate President Jose Avelino told President Elpidio Quirino in 1949 after the senator became one of the few Filipino politicians ever censured for his dealings. "What are we in power for? We are not hypocrites. Why should we pretend to be saints when in reality we are not?. . .When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He made a distinction between a good crook and the bad crooks. We can prepare to be good crooks."

It seemed to me that the transformations that Alay Kapwa sought were the ones the country needed if its lauded moment of "People Power"

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would survive as anything more than a sentimental flash between a corrupt and authoritarian past and a bloody future.

"You can't just watch"

New values, unlike new roads or houses, are a subtle commodity, and it took me a number of months to appreciate what the organization has meant to Tita.

There were eggs, for example. As the purchasing agent for the 12 Alay Kapwa stores, Tita bought about 2,000 of them a week, carefully stacking them under the kitchen light each night to protect them from the rats. She spent hours a day etching account data onto five-by-seven notecards. The trust that her neighbors have shown in asking her to handle hundreds of dollars a week in egg and sugar purchases is a source of both pride and anxiety in her life. She lives in constant fear of broken eggs.

Gradually, Tita's activism extended out of the neighborhood and into the nation. Though her mother and her brothers told her to stay home and out of trouble, Tita joined the Aquino campaign caravans that headed off to nearby towns. When the Constitutional Commission held hearings on the urban poor, Tita testified as the Alay Kapwa emissary. ("Wow, the inside of the Congress is nice," she said.) When the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) called for volunteers, Tita spent a terrified day at Villamoor Air Base, guarding the ballot boxes as soldiers cast their votes.

"What is imperialismo?" Tita asked me one day. "I'm always hearing that imperialismo is the reason that the Filipino is poor, but I don't know what is imperialismo."

Tita may not have been briefed on the spray painted slogans that cover many Manila walls, but her intelligence had led her to raise important questions about the Philippine economy on her own. I learned this in a difficult fashion late one evening when I suggested that we eat at a nearby McDonald's, the only restaurant open. Once inside, she fell strangely silent, obviously disturbed. When I asked what was wrong, she began a quiet but intense series of questions about American corporations and their effect on the economy of the Philippines. Were the profits from our cheeseburgers going back to the States? She wanted to know.

Tita's emerging politics and her ethic of Christian service have their roots in the Alay Kapwa Bible studies. Much of the genius behind Alay Kapwa's work lies in its ability to make religious faith in Leveriza a force for good. In attending some of the Bible studies, I was able to see a bit of how this works.

One Saturday afternoon, I joined Butch Santos, his wife, and about 20 Leveriza women to discuss the first chapter of Acts. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you," Jesus promised the apostles before ascending to the clouds, "and then you will be my witnesses." What lessons does this promise hold for Leveriza?

For 45 minutes, the discussion wandered across the landscape of contemporary Philippine politics. Butch and the others said that the Holy Spirit bears resemblance to People Power. They were both forces that promised to transform communities, liberate them. But how does People Power now apply to Cory? To opposition leader Juan Ponce Enrile? Does People Power require a leader, or, like the Holy Spirit, does it transform the people after the leader departs?

As the conversation strayed and endlessly digressed, Butch tried to rein it in. "Jesus says be my witness," he observed, "What does that require us to do?"

"Act, act, act," said Tita's neighbor Angeles Serrano, fruit vendor, grandmother, and local figure of respect. "You can't just watch."

Butch turned it back on her. "Why don't you run for barangay captain?" he asked.

The increased political thoughtfulness that Alay Kapwa has brought to Tita is only one part of its contribution to her life. A second dwells in the more immediate arena of dignity and self-respect. I caught a glimpse of this at an Alay Kapwa song contest that marked the anniversary of Marcos's ouster. "Maria, Maria," sang Tita and her companions. "You're not just for the bedroom; you're not just for the kitchen. You're a woman. You have rights."

Tita's self-respect was of the quiet variety, not brash or defiant. She often turned her humor on herself and her lot in life. When the scratch of the rats running through the ceiling grew particularly loud, she laughed. "They are very happy," she said. The one time I saw her truly offended was when I returned home from a visit to the television station that anti-Aquino troops had occupied in January during a weak attempt at a coup. I told her that Marcos loyalists had gathered outside the station and begun singing "Cory, Cory, labandera"—Cory is a washwoman—to the tune of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Tita seethed for the rest of the day, not for the attack on the president, whom

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she much admires, and whose autographed photo praising Alay Kapwa hangs on her living room wall, but for the intimation that washwomen were unworthy. "There is nothing wrong with being labandera," she said.

Shortly after I moved in, Tita asked why I spent so much time scribbling into spiral notebooks. I told her I kept a diary and a few days later, on a whim, I bought one for her, fully aware that a notebook might not be the gift of her dreams. Her excitement caught me by surprise. "I have so many stories to tell about what happens to me everyday," she said. More surprising still, for a woman with little education and many chores, she began taking the time to record them.

Months later, she let me read some of her entries. They ranged from the price of dried fish to the funeral service she attended for the late Senator Jose Diokno, a human rights lawyer and acclaimed voice of Filipino nationalism.

One passage in particular is worth quoting at length:

"My work with Alay Kapwa is difficult," she wrote. "Sometimes my head hurts from thinking...At 4:00, eggs arrived...After carrying them I attended a Bible study and then solicited for the payment of eggs and went straight to the market, cooked and ate and totaled and listed. I was tired this afternoon. I'm sad because Emmet hasn't come [home from Saudi Arabia] yet, but I'm happy because I participated in Alay Kapwa. Your body's tired but the feeling is good because you're serving your fellow man free and without payment...."

The passage also shows the presence of temptation. "I don't have any intention of stealing the money," she wrote. "I borrowed some but I paid it back, because it's bad for me if I'm interested in things that are not mine. God knows what I'm doing."

I puzzled over that passage. Her earnest words said a lot about Tita and the changes in her life, but there was something they didn't explicitly reveal, a quality I couldn't quite define, but that seemed an important part of her personality and her political tranformation. Then I realized what it was: her *willfulness*. She writes, and often acts, almost as though she's trying to convince herself of something that she doesn't quite yet believe. Is it really true that "the feeling is good," when "the body is tired"?

There are two value systems competing within her, and within most of her Alay Kapwa neighbors. The new ethic of public devotion is constantly at war with older inclinations of many kinds, including the simple desire to take care of one's own needs first, never mind counting other peoples' eggs. Tita's mother and her siblings don't understand her. They give her fruit from the farm to sell in Leveriza, and she gives it to her Alay Kapwa friends. Emmet, too, wonders why she's off to executive committee meetings leaving him to go to the market and has asked her to give the organization less of her time. And Tita herself sometimes sounds disillusioned, especially if others don't seem to be giving as much as she. The story of Alay Kapwa is a story of these competing values, public versus private.

An ugly argument ensued

There's much that Alay Kapwa hasn't transformed. At times, Tita's religion and her politics both gave me reason to pause. Her religiosity, for example, seemed a quirky amalgam of new belief and old. It could seem quite sophisticated, like when she told me she had asked God, "Why if you love your Son are so many people fighting? Why are so many Filipinos poor?" When I asked what God had answered, she laughed. "Not yet," she said.

But at other times, she seemed to embrace with zeal the more superstitious aspects of religious practice, to the detriment of her other values. She was devoted to a mobile Leveriza shrine called the Lord of Pardons, a half dozen porcelain statues, draped with flowers and surrounded by candles, that rotates homes on a weekly basis.

One day, a quarrel broke out over the shrine. Its owner, whom everyone called only "the old one," wanted to interrupt the rotation and take the shrine to a church to be blessed. The devotees objected to its leaving the squatter area. An ugly argument ensued and one Alay Kapwa member threatened to start punching the old woman who owned the images. I asked Tita who was at fault. "The old one," she said insistently, more worried about a missing statue than about the abuse of an old woman.

On another occasion, it was her political sensibility that surprised me. I accompanied Tita and her companions on a trip to Villa Escudero, a hacienda several hours outside of Manila. The plantation's scale spoke volumes about the nation's history and economics. We traveled a kilometer by motor scooter through coconut groves just to reach the reception center. Our tour guide, Sebastian, declined to answer my question about the hectarage, explaining that current passions for

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land reform make such disclosures imprudent.

Sebastian led us through the family museum, past the big game trophies, the set of Nixon-Marcos-Pinochet commemorative medals, the note from Imelda ("I came, I saw, I was conquered!"), and, inexplicably, the aging baron's port-o-potty ("This is where he made his pooh-pooh," Sebastian explained). Between the tennis trophies and the rare butterflies we came across a small note, handwritten in magic marker, offering the hacienda owner's professed philosophy of life.

"Live simply," it intoned. "Expect little. Give much."

The irony of the sign was too much and I stopped to scribble it in a notebook. Tita and a neighbor stopped too, and smiled approvingly at my note-taking. They agreed quite without irony that it was a beautiful philosophy, worth preserving. For all the rallies they had attended, none seemed to see the political significance of this vast estate.

The nuns' politics could provide different reason for pause. While the thrust of their teachings—the need for greater national independence and pride—was admirable, their recitations were often formulaic.

"Are you CIA?" Sister Christine asked, the first time we met.

"I have American blood in me," said another nun, with a grandfather from Tennessee, "but it's not imperialist."

"Me too, Sister," I said.

My presence at one Alay Kapwa meeting launched one of the Sisters into a discussion of how Americans promote the use of condoms in the Philippines because they fear the Filipinos' numbers. She also explained that by eating candy bars, Americans deprive Filipino children of sugar. This seemed a particularly poor example of economic exploitation given the islands' unsold sugar surpluses and idle cane workers.

I set off another discourse one hot afternoon when I stepped across the alley to buy a soft drink. Thinking it would be rude to treat only myself, I grabbed one for each of the Alay Kapwa members gathered for a meeting at Tita's house. My fumbling entry with seven bottles of Sprite launched Sister Evelyn into another lecture on the evils of multinational corporations in the Philippines, and seemed definitive proof of my CIA ties. The rest of the women drank without complaint.

Whatever its shortcomings, the political culture being built by Alay Kapwa looked pretty good compared to the alternatives on the left and right. I didn't fully appreciate the Alay Kapwa work until I met the local power structure, one priest and 15 barangay captains.

Marcos loves the little man

Among the constant rumors churning through Leveriza's gossip mills, one of the most interesting held that Leveriza's parish priest was related to the Marcoses. The biggest challenge I faced in checking the rumor was finding Father Vicente Dacuycuy awake. For three days in a row when I stopped by his office at various afternoon hours, he was said to be napping. When I finally caught him, he said the rumor had arisen because Marcos's mother, a friend of a friend, had attended his first Leveriza mass.

Blood tie or no, Father Dacuycuy could find little to fault in the decades of Marcos's rule. "It's really hard to criticize," he said. "Because when you get in that position, maybe you'll do worse." As for martial law, he said that Marcos was simply acting as any father would when faced with disorder among his brood. "You have to punish them," he said. "That's your responsibility."

Father Dacuycuy seemed to conceive of his own role similarly, as that of a cold-eyed disciplinarian. He feared that the Sisters pandered to people and risked spoiling them. "As regards the administration of sacraments," he said. "The people want this free. What would happen if I allowed that? The church is here on earth and

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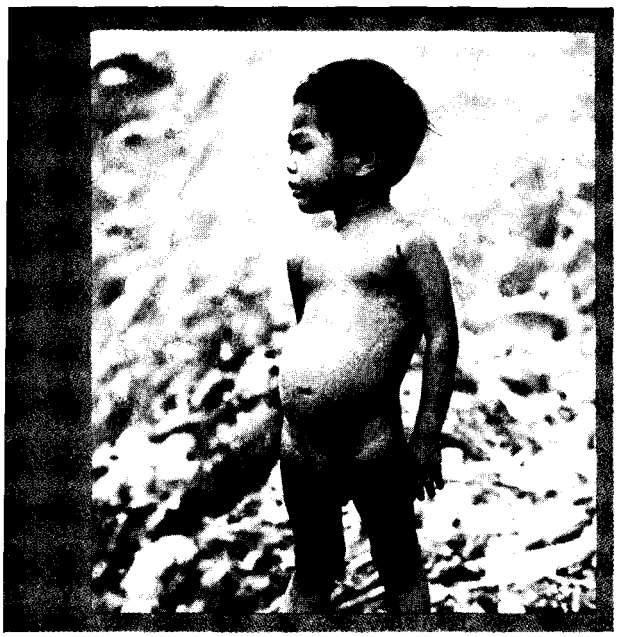

photo by Charles Steiner-J.B. Pictures

has material needs too."

When I asked Father Dacuycuy to name his proudest accomplishment during his decade in Leveriza, he mentioned two mass weddings for couples who were living together with only civil marriages or no marriages at all. "That is one of our big problems here," he said.

A second pillar of authority in Leveriza consisted of the barangay captains. The system of barangay government was put in place by Marcos shortly after the declaration of martial law. Marcos endowed the captains, who presided over units of several hundred families, with minor policing powers and with control over a few programs like recreation.

My visits with one captain, Ador Reyes, taught me much about the loyalties Marcos commanded and the resistance the nuns have faced. He is a thickly muscled man, who favors tank tops and jeans and runs three small pool tables off one of the alleys. He supplements that income with bit parts in Filipino movies. Ador got his start in politics as a bodyguard, first to a city councilman and later to the Manila mayor. His alley-side office is decorated with souvenirs of his twin passions, film posters and autographed portraits of politicians.

While the nuns regularly denounce the presence of American military bases and corporations, Ador spoke of the U.S. in the admiring terms typical of his generation. He was 11 years old when American GIs arrived as liberators, bestowing their fabled chocolates and cigarettes. He said he cried the day in 1946 that the American flag was lowered and the flag of the independent Philippines raised in its stead. "The U.S. is the greatest country in the world," he loudly announced. "Who else would lend you so much money and never make you pay it back?"

Ador's career affords a glimpse of the skill with which the Marcoses cemented political loyalties, even among such minor clients as a squatter area barangay captain. In Ador's case, the courtship seems to have begun after he helped foil a kidnapping attempt outside the Manila zoo. Two days later, Ador said, a soldier arrived in Leveriza and summoned him to Malacanang Palace. Ador replayed the scene for me:

"Good morning, Mr. President," Ador said. "Anything I can do for you Mr. President?"

Marcos said, "Good work. You wait for Madame Imelda."

As a token of appreciation, Madame Imelda presented Ador with a presidential medallion—and an envelope containing $700 in pesos. The solicitations didn't stop there. "Every birthday anniversary I receive a letter from Mr. President Marcos inviting me to Malacanang," Ador said. The story is probably embellished, but Ador did show me one of the letters and a souvenir box stamped with Imelda's name.

Other government benefits have also come his way. By his own account, Ador used about $5,000 slated for neighborhood development to put up a two-room building. It contains a bed, a desk, his film posters, a stereo, and other personal belongings. While some might call it a house, Ador calls it a barangay hall. "I sleep here so my constituents will be very confident when they call me," he said. "I want to give my full services to my constituents, sometimes one o'clock in the morning, sometimes two o'clock. . . ."

While Ador's material gain certainly gave him reasons to say nice things about Marcos, I was surprised to hear the conviction in his voice when he spoke of the exiled leader's greatness. He said he wished "Mrs. Aquino" no harm, and that he hadn't joined the loyalists demonstrating against her. But he insisted on playing for me a taped Marcos speech broadcast from Hawaii, and his voice carried a trace of almost religious longing when he mentioned Marcos's name.

"Mr. President Marcos loved the small people, the poorest people," Ador said, perhaps thinking of the past payoffs he himself had received. "If he steals money from the government, he gives it to the little people of the Philippines, not to himself."

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More puzzling than Ador's devotion was the enthusiasm of those who had gained nothing themselves, but who still voiced the "little man" line on Marcos. One afternoon in the poorest barangay in Leveriza, I ate lunch with a hefty man who makes his living as a night security guard at a Max's Fried Chicken restaurant. Nonie works seven 12-hour shifts a week and earns $55 a month. He lives with his wife and two children in a six-by-ten foot room, eating and sleeping on the floor. They take showers at a public faucet beside a garbage dump.

We began talking politics and the "little man" litany began. As an example of Marcos's efforts to improve the average Filipino's life, Nonie cited roads and bridges that had made transportation in his native province easier and had provided jobs. He also mentioned the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the $8.5 million concert hall Imelda erected to entertain playmates like Van Cliburn and Christina Ford. It was three blocks from his house. He had never been inside.

Bare-chested, hunched over a plate of fish and rice, Nonie boasted that he and Marcos belonged to the same club. He called it "Takosa," a Tagalog expression I'd never heard. I looked puzzled and he began to laugh. It stands for "takot sa asawa," he said— "afraid of the wife." He and Marcos had the same problem, he explained, controlling extravagant wives. Yes, the Marcoses stole a lot, he finally conceded when I asked about the missing billions. But it was only government money, he said. Nonie works for a private company. It had nothing to do with him.

Plotting the class war

Unlike older Filipinos, those now in their late teens and twenties never knew GIs with chocolate bars. They've been fed on slogans instead, like "Down with the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship," and, more recently, "Down with the U.S.-Aquino dictatorship." The slogans have made a mark.

With few exceptions, the most thoughtful and energetic of Leveriza's youth displayed at least a sympathy for the politics of the left, and many had actually joined left-leaning organizations, both legal and illegal. Those with more average abilities tended to lead less politicized lives, focusing on trade schools, dreaming of a rare spot in the U.S. Navy. Others, with fewer scruples or ideals, opted for gangster vocations in the nearby red light district, or perhaps became cops.

This crude correlation between talent and vaguely leftist leanings held true in Tita's family

photo by Charles Steiner-J.B. Pictures

as well. Her oldest child, Rolando, was a 19-year-old of average ambitions enrolled without interest in a technical school. His outside activities included little besides an occasional game of pool or basketball. To the extent he possessed a political sensibility, he claimed to back Marcos. "Marcos is stronger than Cory," he would say. But his assertions seemed designed more to annoy his mother than to advance a political cause.

Tita's next eldest, Ruwena, was the household's popular culture maven. A birth defect left her with a weak heart that had forced her to quit school. Ruwena whiled away her days at the counter of the co-op store, spinning the radio dial from one Top 40 hit to the next, earnestly debating the celebrity news. Will Sharon leave Gabby? Is Lot-Lot going steady? Saturday nights found her planted in front of the TV for the weekly installment of Inday Badiday's "See True," where teenage film stars told the Filipino Rona Barrett whether they were "serious" or "just friends." One night Tita interrupted and switched to a Tagalog news show on the economy, leaving Ruwena shrieking.

(Perhaps the left has it right about religion being the peoples' opiate, but in Leveriza I think television is more narcotic. Filipino TV revels in bad imitations of the worst of American offerings, poisoning the national imagination with a steady diet of game shows, beauty contests, and plotless martial arts films. Every day, in tens of thousands of shacks across Manila, squatters watch four-year-olds dance to "Surfin' USA,"

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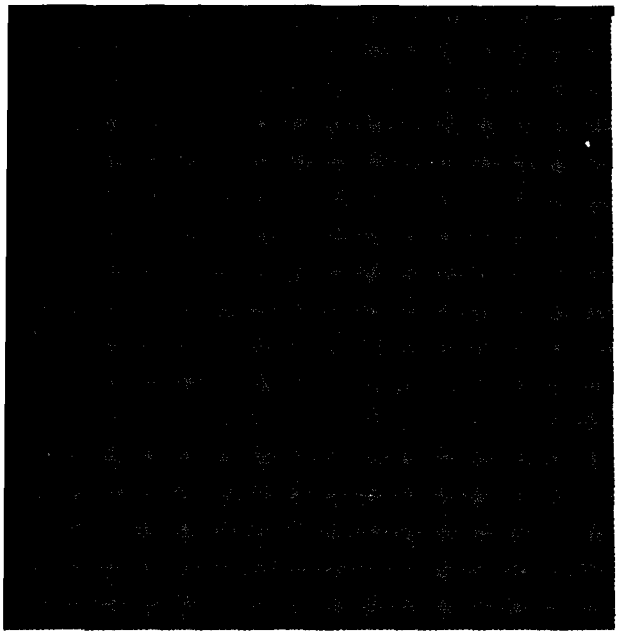

competing for the title of "Little Mr. Pogi," Taglish for Little Mr. Handsome.)

Tita's third and most talented child, 16-year-old Rosalie, took only a casual interest in the vapid songs and films that held her sister enthralled. She is serious, occasionally brooding, and unusally devoted to her studies. While Tita's other children were skillfully devising ever-new excuses to miss school, Rosalie would defy her mother and hike to class with the flu. She spent much of her spare time singing political songs in the alleys and writing plays about class conflict.

One typical play opened with a scene in a squatter area where a group of poor women were sharing a meal of shrimp paste and cheap fish. The second scene flashed to the house of a rich family where a plot was being hatched to raze the squatter area and put up a factory and a disco. In the end, the bulldozers won the battle, but a coalition of poor came together and promised to keep fighting the war.

Rosalie was plotting the class war on paper, but a few people in Leveriza were waging it for real. Several years ago, a communist assassination squad known as a sparrow unit murdered a Leveriza cop as he straddled his motorcycle in the morning. The officer, patrolman Fernando Barateta, was a member of a SWAT team who had earned the communists' ire with his reputation for brutality in breaking up demonstrations and picket lines. A number of Leveriza teens enjoyed the story of the patrolman's encounter with the people's justice and told it with obvious pride. He had "blood debts," they said.

I met few in Leveriza who claimed to belong to the Communist Party of the Philippines. I met more, particularly students, who belonged to one of the banned organizations of the National Democratic Front that supports the communists' war on the government. I met a larger number still who belonged to legal groups that subscribed to many of the same beliefs. To encourage such activity, the CPP had sent a few organizers into Leveriza. "Ka" (for "kasama," or comrade) Tito Santamaria was one of them.

At age 26, Tito (not his real name) was married and had a child, and had spent the past eight years of his life working full time as an unpaid organizer, living on whatever donations he could solicit. Tito grew up in a squatter area not far from Leveriza, the son of a dressmaker and a public school teacher. Like most of his comrades, he was careful to provide me with a precise reading of his class origins, which he described as the "lower strata of the petite bourgeoisie."

His introduction to politics followed a common pattern, coming during his student days at one of Manila's many diploma mills, where he began to attend teach-ins conducted by the leftist League of Filipino Students, a legal organization. A few months later, he was recruited into Kabataang Makabayan ("Nationalist Youth"), part of the outlawed NDF. After cutting his teeth for a year or so on student organizing—opposing tuition hikes, agitating for greater student council power—he was invited into the CPP itself. "They watch you, like the banana," he said. "Until the time when you are ripe."

Along the way, Tito received instruction in the three "isms" that the left holds responsible for Filipino poverty and oppression: feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucrat capitalism. Armed with these tools of Marxist analysis, Tito and five other CPP organizers arrived in Leveriza in 1981, he said, hoping to mobilize the masses. But the protests they sought never materialized. Demonstrations required bullhorns, leaftlets, and money for transportation, Tito said, but he had been trained mostly in isms. "Our leaders did not teach us how to launch local struggle," he explained, "because our leaders also did not know how to launch local struggle."

As the barangay captains had feared, Alay Kapwa became a target for CPP manipulation, as Tito and his comrades joined meetings and Bible studies. On one level, they have failed so far. The CPP urged a boycott of the 1986 presiden-

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tial election calling it a sham; Alay Kapwa ignored the boycott, throwing its energies behind the Aquino campaign. The CPP urged Filipinos to vote against the new constitution, which Sister Christine helped write. Alay Kapwa members, viewing the vote as a referendum on Aquino, attended rallies for its support. The CPP urged a boycott of last spring's congressional elections. But many Alay Kapwa members joined campaign demonstrations and most supported the Aquino ticket. "Until now, we still only influence a handful of people there," Tito lamented, explaining that the people lacked the "consciousness" to recognize Cory Aquino's "fascism."

Sister Christine and Butch Santos know that Alay Kapwa is a target, and argue that in fact the group hinders the CPP by offering an alternative ideology. "It proves that you don't have to be a communist and you don't have to be a rightist," said Sister Christine. I did meet a couple of women who said they had been persuaded by the communists' militant views until they got involved with Alay Kapwa, which acted as a moderating influence.

But I also met others, particularly among the young, who saw little difference between the "nationalist" goals of Alay Kapwa and the "nationalist" goals of the CPP, who saw no conflict in an avowal of support for the Aquino government, and one for the communist guerrillas waging war against it. (Sister Christine herself voices only occasional anticommunist critiques, while saving her most vituperative attacks to denounce the "rightists," her most scornful term.) Then again, ideological confusion seems an inevitable risk when asking previously apolitical people to begin thinking about politics. Thus far at least, neither the communists nor the loyalists seem happy with Alay Kapwa, which is, I think, one good sign.

The rally

While Tito failed to spark a revolt, he and others like him did have some success in spreading the word about the three "isms." He, and thousands of other young organizers have spread other words as well: Central Intelligence Agency, Low Intensity Conflict, Phoenix Counterinsurgency Plan, General Singlaub, IMF-World Bank. I was constantly hearing this technical vocabulary of leftist critique spilling forth from people who spoke little other English.

At times, something gets lost in the translation. In a conversation one night, one of Tito's students turned the three "isms" into four and began telling me about "bureaucratism," and "capitalism," until the embarrassed cadre intervened.

What seemed most troubling about the left in Leveriza, and elsewhere in the Philippines, wasn't the casual embrace of Marxist vocabulary, but a certain blitheness towards the potential consequences of revolution. Tito voiced sanguine assurances that jobs and freedom, a free press, and free vote would blossom just as soon as the imperialists were smashed. Hardly anyone I spoke to, whether Leveriza pundit or mountain commander, paid heed to the thought that revolutions can go astray.

Certainly Southeast Asia offers no shortage of examples. In Leveriza, many spoke of American misdeeds in Vietnam. And given decades of U.S. support for the Marcos regime, they had cause to be apprehensive about U.S. intentions in the Philippines. But no one mentioned the Killing Fields, even as the detritus of that revolution continued to wash up on Philippine shores in their battered boats.

Sitting in the alley, fielding questions about U.S. "imperialism" one day, I asked if the revolution in the Soviet Union had been betrayed. While many had voiced admiration for the Sandinista triumph, the Russian Revolution seemed to be one they had missed. "The Soviet Union, is that communist?" someone asked. A conference ensued, and a consensus was reached. "It's communist," answered one activist, "but revisionist."

I joined this group one afternoon for an anti-Aquino march on Malacanang Palace. It was an indignation rally, launched several days after government soldiers had opened fire on a crowd demanding land reform. The shooting left 16 dead and 100 wounded.

The soldiers' brutality was clear and the tens of thousands of demonstrators were more than justified in their ire. Yet there was something slightly haunting about watching them march past the palace, with faces covered in red scarves, hands raised overhead and bent into imitation pistols, fingers pulling mock triggers. It may not be long until those hands hold real guns. And there's reason to question whether what speeds from the barrel will be justice.

Tita, as it turns out, stayed home from that rally, which she feared would end in violence. But a few days earlier, when the farmers had been wounded, she and other members of Alay Kapwa cooked large cauldrons of fish and rice and set up a relief post, feeding hundreds. □

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In Joan Didion's Miami, the enemies are Castro, John Kennedy, and democracy

Revenge in a Hot Place

by John Rothchild

Joan Didion has written a superlative account of Miami, beginning with what she has been able to ignore.* She ignores her own drama as Gringa in Latinland, a fascination to which she succumbed in *Salvador*. Beyond one or two cocaine anecdotes, necessary to prove that this is Miami we're talking about, she says nothing further about drugs. Unless she is scratching for ethos, she is indifferent to the new Miami architecture, the nightlife, the weather, the revitalized art deco district, or "Miami Vice." She overlooks the fact that Miami has been discovered by New York as a place to be seen. She takes no part in the nervous Assimilation Watch—that is, do the Cubans prefer to drink Coke and watch TV in English, or do they prefer to drink Yerba Mate soda and watch TV in Spanish?

Of George Gilder and George Will, wide-eyed observers who came to Miami's Little Havana and saw in its ebullient plantain vendors the colorful tropical reenactment of the Ellis Island story, Didion writes:

"Fixed as they were on this image of the melting pot, of immigrants fleeing a disruptive revolution to find a place in the American sun, Anglos did not on the whole understand that assimilation would be considered by most Cubans a doubtful goal at best."

Instead, Didion tells the serious Miami story, the Miami story as understood by 700,000 Cubans, which is to say, a story of exile and not of immigration, of intransigence and not absorption, a story whose essential elements have not changed since the terrible defeat at the Bay of Pigs, a story that began with a single villain, Castro, but where villainy has spread to the Democratic party and *The Miami Herald*, a story with only one acceptable ending: revenge.

John Rothchild, a former editor of The Washington Monthly, *lives in Miami Beach.*

**Miami.* Joan Didion. *Simon & Schuster, $17.95.*

John Kennedy, traitor

Miami's influence as a city goes far beyond its economy and its character *in situ*. That Miami has a foreign policy is the kind of detail that arouses Didion's curiosity—no other U.S. city outside Washington has so single-mindedly pursued an international crusade. It took the Irish and the Italians in the northern neighborhoods a couple of generations to work up through the wards and the sinecures and into national power politics, while Miami exiles were admitted into the Oval Office, into clandestine discussions, since the earliest days of the war against Castro. Not all Miami was there of course, but Cubans, such as Jorge Mas Canosa, a director of the Cuban American National Foundation, have been prominent in Washington for years. Didion points out that Mas Canosa is still generally unknown to Miami's Anglos.

Since the bitter lesson of the Bay of Pigs, that the U.S. government only can be trusted while it plots in secret, Miami has engaged in a series of open defiances (the Mariel boatlift, launched against President Carter's orders) and abetted the various subterranean missions (Watergate, the contra supply network) that have changed the rules of politics. Miami as a staging area interests Didion, Miami at the action end of the CIA plastique and the C-5A flights, Miami as the most unofficial of official channels. In and out of the trap doors of Washington sneak two decades of khaki-clad intriguers.

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The Bay of Pigs is old news, as is the CIA's original training of the exiles, especially in detonation, which led to a busy decade of free-lance political bombings in this country. It is no secret that perhaps half the Cuban male exile population was naturalized on covert action, trained in undercover operations. What Didion adds is a context, a method of presentation that gives the Miami story a sombrous continuity. Names appear and reappear, incidents for which Anglos have short memories are, in the Cuban community, ritualized in the procession of "la lucha," the struggle:

"For most of them as children there had of course been the formative story of la lucha against Spain, the central scenario of 19th-century Cuba. For some of their fathers there had been la lucha against Gerardo Machado and for some of them there had been la lucha against Fulgencio Batista and for all of them—for those who had fought originally with the 26 Julio and for those who had fought against it, for barbudos and Batistianos alike, there was now la lucha on the grand canvas of a quarter century, la lucha purified, la lucha in a preservative vacuum, la lucha not only against Fidel Castro but against his allies, and his agents, and all those who could conceivably be believed to have aided or encouraged him."

The litany of la lucha demands a careful choice of words. Words are taken very seriously in Miami—people have been killed for using the wrong words. From Didion, we learn that a recent conference entitled "The Future of Hispanic Theater in Miami: Goals and Constraints" required a metal detector at the door to guard against a retaliatory strike against one of the panelists, playwright Dolores Prida, who years earlier had been connected to "dialogo"—a word that suggested communicating with the devil, Castro. Where else but Miami would Luciano Nieves have been shot dead in a parking lot merely for having raised the possibility that Castro could be brought down "politically"? It is this potentially fatal Cuban lexicography that Didion explores, safe words and unsafe words, subtle distinctions with unsubtle consequences. The recondite staking out of political positions that nobody can seem to fathom but for which everybody seems willing to die is baffling to Anglos, who prefer to dismiss Cuban exiles simply as "right-wing."

"A man who buys a Browning and Beretta and an AR-15 and an UZI under his own name does not have as his first interest the successful evasion of American justice."

"Right-wing" simply does not capture the wildest elements of la lucha. We learn from Didion that the owner of the above-mentioned arsenal, one Eduardo Arocena, did not see any necessity to hide his ownership nor his intentions to use weapons domestically. The jury that convicted Arocena on 71 counts of bombing and one count of assassinating a Cuban attache at the United Nations must have thought he was a terrorist, but to Miami at large, Arocena will always be a patriot. The mayor said so in a speech.

We learn from Didion that the second most hated man in Miami, after Castro, is John Kennedy—hated forever for his handling of the "disposal problem" of Cubans at the Bay of Pigs, for withdrawing U.S. air support at the precise moment the hapless brigade hit the beach, the primeval example of Anglo betrayal.

Truths are not self-evident in Miami, at least not the ones in our familiar Declaration, and politics is taken too seriously for there to be any casual political conversation of the kind one hears in Houston or Chicago or Atlanta. After hanging around the popular Cuban radio stations, and listening in at various exile functions, Didion observes that Miami is the second city in this part of the world where people actually look over their shoulders before they speak. The other is Havana.

Paella in the paper

"The Cubans will not read it," Bernardo Benes reassures his wife, who is worried that what he is telling Didion will appear in a book. Benes is probably right. Cubans generally do not buy Anglo books or Anglo newspapers, which has been a problem for *The Miami Herald*. As the city has doubled in size, the *Herald*'s circulation has remained flat. The editors first thought there was a language problem and put out an edition in Spanish, but *El Herald* never really caught on, and the editors have since learned that beneath the language problem there is the philosophy problem, a basic difference of opinion with a majority of the city's inhabitants over elemental questions of the First Amendment and the role of the free press.

Didion's book appears just at the time that the editors of the *Herald* have been trying to put more paella into the paper, more stories about beans and rice, Cuban quince parties, guayabera shirts—all part of the effort to be Good Neighbors. Just this month, the Cubans

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WASSERMAN

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countered with a full-page advertisement blasting the *Herald* for betraying them politically, a betrayal that all the paella stories in the world can't absolve. All Cubans didn't support this ad, of course, just the Cuban American National Foundation. Among the directors is Mas Canosa, whose importance is noted by Didion.

"A political approach implied give and take, even compromise, an unthinkable construct in a community organized exclusively around the principle of implacable resistance."

There is general agreement among Miami exiles that the best way to defend democracy is to disallow it. This hasn't happened, of course, but one has a suspicion that the tape on the Watergate doors could just as readily be slapped across the mouths of local liberals, which is to say, anyone to the left of Pat Buchanan. Anglos, for their part, privately suspect that if the exiles had their way we'd soon have a dictator for mayor.

Pick up the *Herald* these days, and these serious differences of opinion are lost in the local burlesque. A conniver named San Pedro goes on trial for offering bribes to half the local power structure, a few cocaine cops have metastasized into a cocaine brigade, the county manager and other notables have been caught buying stolen suits, and the simple investor who gunned down his stockbroker turns out to be an ex-con with an alias, a gun bought with a credit card, and a curious pile of cash.

One wonders if the exile viewpoint will win over the *Herald*. Is it possible that this winner of numerous Pulitzers will be forced to enlist as official cheerleader in la lucha? Perhaps not, but some reporters tell me privately that their work is being questioned by certain editors, who themselves have been told they must be more sensitive to what the most vocal—which usually means the most fanatical—exiles have been saying. Columnist Carl Hiaasen, the great *Herald* gadfly, and probably the most hated Anglo in town after President Kennedy, labors under increasing pressure. Didion writes:

"Revolutions and counterrevolutions are framed in the private sector, and the state security apparatus exists exclusively to be enlisted by one or another private player."

Miamington

One wonders, also, if the exile politics will win over the nation. As Didion has said, her book is as much about Washington as it is about Miami, about the long-standing connections

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between operatives here and there, connections between the back rooms of Washington and the airstrip at Opa Locka, where Miami and Washington converge into some murkier Miamington. If anything has changed from Watergate to Irangate, it is that the perpetrators have learned to better protect themselves and to provide deniability, and one foresees in their actions the frightening possibilities of private cadres with official blessings doing the work of the Argentinian or the Chilean death squads.

"This particular political style, indigenous to the Caribbean and to Central America, has now been naturalized in the United States."

Didion leaves us at the edge of the secret contra supply flights, but the future is not exactly unknown. There is the reverberative effect of certain ideas. All the decades of our clandestine adventures in Latin America have been turned back against us, and if there is any such thing as the sins of intrigue being revisited on our shores, then Miami is the gateway to that revisitation. □

Three years after Bhopal, the victims suffer lethal politics as well as lethal gas

Twice Poisoned

by Michael Isikoff

It is now three years since a deadly cloud of methyl isocynate gas drifted from a Union Carbide pesticide plant over Bhopal, India, sending tens of thousands of gasping residents fleeing in horror. It remains the world's worst technological disaster, far more lethal and in many ways more ominous than the more highly publicized accidents last year—the Challenger space shuttle explosion and the Chernobyl nuclear plant breakdown. Yet unlike Challenger and Chernobyl, the events in Bhopal have never received anything approaching the exhaustive investigation, much less media scrutiny, they deserve. Today, such basic questions as what caused the accident and how many died remain in dispute. As for the victims, anywhere from 20,000 to 100,000 still suffer from blurred vision, disabling lung diseases, intestinal bleeding, and neurological and psychological disorders.

Who is to blame for the Bhopal catastrophe? Carbide, the multibillion dollar multinational based in Danbury, Connecticut, has always maintained that operation and responsibility for the Bhopal plant resided solely with its Indian affiliate, Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL), which was 50.9 percent owned by its American parent. Yet, as Dan Kurzman points out, safety conditions at Bhopal were long known to be deplorable—and the corporate chieftains in Danbury had every reason to know it.* Indeed, the similarities to Challenger are eerie. As far back as 1979, a team of safety investigators from Danbury criticized the lack of an emergency evacuation plan. Three years later, another safety team warned of the dangers of a "runaway reaction" in a methyl isocynate storage tank. Carbide assumed the inspectors' recommendations were being implemented by its Indian managers. Nobody ever checked to find out.

On the other hand, the Indian government hardly comes off any better. Kurzman discloses that numerous Indian officials had close ties to UCIL, helping the company escape regulatory crackdowns. (Cronyism and conflicts of interest know no boundaries: Kurzman reports that a local Congress-I party leader was UCIL's legal adviser. Several relatives of ranking government officials were on the UCIL payroll, including the manager of the Bhopal plant, who was the son-in-law of Rajiv Gandhi's minister of human resources.)

But the real disgrace was the Indian government's actions following the accident. Early last year, Union Carbide offered a $350 million settlement, a not unreasonable sum that, more importantly, would have given compensation and substantial medical help to the survivors right away. But Gandhi's government torpedoed the

Michael Isikoff is a reporter for The Washington Post.

**A Killing Wind: Inside Union Carbide and the Bhopal Castrophe.* Dan Kurzman. *McGraw-Hill, $19.95*

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deal and cut off negotiations, fearing it would be roasted by left-wing critics. So the case has dragged on another year and a half in the Indian courts through four different judges. (One had to be disqualified when he was discovered to be a secret plaintiff.) As Kurzman states, the Bhopal survivors have "been victimized twice—once by poison and again by politics."

Kurzman did yeoman research for this book, visiting Bhopal and interviewing scores of victims as well as Indian and Carbide officials. His portrait of Union Carbide Chairman Warren Anderson is particularly devastating. Immediately after the disaster Anderson insisted on personally flying to Bhopal, where he was promptly arrested by local officials. He returned to the U.S., telling the press that he would be consumed by Bhopal for the rest of his career. (Anderson even shunned restaurants fearing he would be recognized and blamed for the mass destruction.) That obsession didn't last long. By late 1985, Anderson's main concerns had shifted to fighting off a hostile corporate raider and nailing down a golden parachute for himself. He retired last year barely mentioning Bhopal in a farewell speech touting the company's earnings.

Kurzman does make at least one important contribution: by carefully reviewing the statistics from the city's crematoriums and cemetaries, particularly in the two years after the accident, he argues persuasively that the actual death toll approached 8,000—more than three times the Indian government's official tally of 2,500.

But this book should not stand as the definitive account of the tragedy. Kurzman never finds a focus for his story and his writing is riddled with cliches. More importantly, he has few answers for many of the unresolved questions about Bhopal. Did cyanide—the most deadly of all poisons—also leak from the Carbide plant that night and substantially swell the death toll? And what, in the end, actually caused the accident? Carbide has charged sabotage, pointing the finger at times at unidentified "Sikh terrorists" or a disgruntled worker. Most readers will find it difficult to sift through the highly technical arguments on both sides of these issues. Apparently so did Kurzman. He merely gives the pros and cons, never forming any conclusions. That may be appropriate for daily journalism, but it is a rather annoying failure in a book purporting to tell what really happened at Bhopal. □

I Like Mike

But I'd like Michael Kinsley even better if he'd wear his heart on his sleeve more often

by Jonathan Rowe

I first encountered Michael Kinsley when I went to work for Ralph Nader in the early '70s. In an impulsive moment, and intrigued by the obscurity of the subject, I had volunteered to work on the issue of local property taxes, which had aroused Nader's interest at the time. (This was seven years before California's Proposition 13.) Nader gave me a stack of memos that a young Harvard student named Kinsley had written for him the summer before.

Jonathan Rowe is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

Up to then, I had vaguely supposed there was a regulation someplace requiring that memos be as magisterial and deadpan as the news pages of *The New York Times*. And my early reading on property taxes—reports from Brookings and the like—had led me to believe that the subject deserved every bit of obscurity that had come its way.

But Kinsley's memos were something else. With precocious insight and an infectious elan, they detailed a world of crooked assessors, bizarre local assessment practices, and cranky, eccentric tax protesters. The memos were well-reported yet

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irreverent. Most of all, they were fun.

Since then, Kinsley has become the best read in Washington, and a new collection of his columns and essays demonstrates why.* They show a playful yet deadly wit and a presence that leaves no nuance unattended. There are few things I await eagerly out of Washington every week. Kinsley's TRB column in *The New Republic* is one.

For those who have somehow missed him, Kinsley is *The New Republic*'s 36-year-old editor and something of a "wunderkind" on the Washington journalism scene. After studying in England as a Rhodes Scholar, he became *The New Republic*'s managing editor at the age of 25 while still in law school. (Earlier he had been an editor of this magazine.) In 1981, he took two years off to turn *Harper's* magazine from staid to sassy and win a National Magazine Award. He returned to *The New Republic* after a tiff with the board of directors of *Harper's*, a fairly regular occurence in his career.

Kinsley writes a column for *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* (in which he often twits that paper's editors) and appears from time to time on TV's "The McLaughlin Group." He just signed on to write essays for *Time* magazine. How he cranks out all this is a wonder to plodders like me. And somehow, after ten years of this, he still seems precocious.

Kinsley's subjects range from weighty legal and economic issues to high-spirited piques: the media's hyping of the Schroeder heart surgery story, for example, and the way Bernadine Dohrn, former leader of the violent "Weatherman" faction of SDS, emerged from ten years of hiding to land a job at a prestigious Chicago law firm, thanks to her big shot father-in-law. "Dohrn Again," this one was called.

Kinsley's speciality is the pretense and hypocrisy beat, which he walks in a state of perpetual red alert. Those he catches will think twice about repeating the offense.

An example is Mary Cunningham, mentoree, girlfriend, and later wife of William Agee, the former Bendix president, who portrays herself as a media martyr and a "latter-day Joan of Arc."

"Her only ambition was to do good," Kinsley writes, mocking Cunningham's melodramatic tone. "Her saintly impulse has inclined her toward a career in investment banking. . . ."

Kinsley has a gift for catching the pompous with their pants down. To determine whether Washingtonians actually read those weighty tomes they discuss so knowledgeably on the talk shows, Kinsley stuck little notes in the back pages of bookstore copies, offering a reward for anyone who found the notes and responded. No one did.

And take those unnamed "thoughtful observers" that populate the high-minded papers, rejecting "simplistic arguments" and demanding "careful thinking on the part of policy makers." By searching through Nexus, a computerized clip file, Kinsley found that 67 of these sages had so spoken since 1977. Actually, that's nothing compared to the things that "remain to be seen," of which there were 1,223 in 1985 alone.

Kinsley takes it as a personal challenge to voice the forbidden thought. In "Let 'Em Rot in the Sun" he admits that economic hardship in the Texas oilfields doesn't move him all that much. A few years earlier, after all, those same folks were sporting bumper stickers that read "Freeze a Yankee—Drive 75."

"It's not a very attractive emotion," he says of his glee, "and in due course perhaps I'll seek professional help. But first I'm going to enjoy it for a while."

There are no shortages of potential highlight clips in these spirited sorties. Regular readers of the *Monthly* are familiar with what the editor in chief calls the "Don't Say Anything Bad About the Good Guys" syndrome. This describes the way liberal thought has stagnated by refusing to acknowledge the shortcomings of liberal causes and groups. It doesn't describe Kinsley. Unlike ideological axe-grinders, with which Washington abounds, Kinsley takes special delight in routing the totems and phonies from his own liberal camp.

Here's Kinsley on antiwar physicians, who think they can dispel the nuclear boogie via stern health warnings: "How is this medical education campaign to be conducted in the Soviet Union, let alone Libya, Pakistan, South Africa, and so on?" On the ACLU's annual yuletide crusade against the creche menace: "People who want to go through life with nothing to remind them of their minority status ask too much." On the Democratic National Committee's Platform: "Is this liberalism or is it social hypochondria?"

As to his spoof of the DNC's effort to balance its Fairness Commission according to sexual preference, I won't spoil the fun.

Well, okay. But just a peek. "Twenty-seven on top, 21 underneath, and two standing up. What? You're kidding. Well, if Yankelovich says so, eight on top, 29 underneath, 13 standing up."

**Curse of the Giant Muffins and Other Washington Maladies.* Michael Kinsley. *Summit Books, $17.95.*

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It is hard to think of a more revered liberal tract of the '80s than Jonathan Schell's *Fate of the Earth*, on the threat of nuclear war. Kinsley calls it "apocalyptic bigthink" and "one of the most pretentious things I've ever read." " 'Gosh, is this profound,' is about all that many sonorous passages convey."

I think Schell deserves more points than Kinsley gives him for at least being on the right side. But Schell does serve up a tempting setup line with his earnest pronouncement that he is leaving to others the task of working out the practical solutions to the nuclear mess. "Good heavens," Kinsley exclaims. "Is he just going to head off on a book tour and leave us stranded?"

What makes Kinsley so good—aside from being uncommonly bright—is that he is resolutely un-Washington. The preoccupation of most of Kinsley's peers is to be seen as being on the inside. Every time I see Fred Barnes, Kinsley's amiable colleague at *The New Republic*, in print or on "The McLaughlin Group," he manages to make known that he, Fred Barnes, has talked to important people at the White House that week.

Kinsley, by contrast, writes entirely from the public record. His primary "sources" are the clip file and his wit. Not caring what potential sources may think, he can say what he thinks. (At times he's burned bridges while still standing on them, as when he resigned from *The New Republic*—later to return—over the owner's refusal to print an article criticizing Ted Kennedy's amorous appetite.)

Though Kinsley avoids the pretense of profundity, his flip style can be deceiving. He writes so engagingly about law and economics—his fortes—because he understands them so well. Unlike most journalists, he is not buffaloed by the lingo.

It took Kinsley, for example, to blow the whistle on the Nobel prize that went to James Buchanan, the conservative economist. Buchanan got the prize for his supposedly earth-shattering theory—which he calls "public choice"—that legislators tend to act in their self-interest. This theory greatly pleased the business world since it made government regulation seem suspect. Kinsley skewered this debunking view of government by turning its cynicism back upon the debunker. He conjured up an "academic choice" theory of scholarship to explain Buchanan's views:

"By coming up with a lot of fancy theories to justify the self-interested desires of the business community—for lower taxes, less regulation, etc.—[Buchanan] may find himself earning a six figure salary (one-third subsidized by corporations) as head of his own center, and winning all sorts of awards to boot."

All this is a high-wire act that few can pull off but it is also an irresistible example for young writers. I suspect Kinsley will have as much influence upon the next generation of political writers as any practitioner of the craft.

At times, though, Kinsley permits his logic and wit to run ahead of him. It's an occupational hazard of the really bright. The fact is that underneath the deft and delightful argumentation is a fairly traditional liberal, who thinks the wealthy should pay taxes to support programs for the poor, and so forth. Nobody is better at routing the forces of reaction. And no one chastises liberals more adeptly for the constituency-mongering and other errors of their own camp. But somehow Kinsley missed some of the more constructive enthusiasms of his generation—environmental and natural resource concerns, for example. He also missed the idea of a qualitative economics, which looks beyond the mere quantity of production, consumption, and so forth, to the quality of work and life resulting from these.

Kinsley shrugs his shoulders, for example, at such problems as the displacement of workers and communities due to the regional shift of industry. It's sad, he says. But earlier in the century, people moaned about the mass exodus from the farm, and it all worked out fine (Granted, his glee over hardship in the sunbelt was partly tongue in cheek. Still, the joke sours a bit when you discover that emergency food requests in Texas have doubled since 1983.)

More significantly, though he has rightly criticized the "paper economy" of corporate takeover wars and the like, he dismisses worries about the export of American industry and the growth of a service economy in its place. "The shift of labor and capital from manufacturing to services clearly increases their productivity," he argues. "It wouldn't be happening if the payoff weren't better."

This is the parlance of conventional economics, talking about "labor" and "productivity" in general as though it makes no difference what in particular is being accomplished, or by whom, and as though maximum production—wherever it occurs—is the only thing that matters. A million dollars worth of Nautilus memberships or corporate management seminars is not the same as a like output of shoes or tractors or

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energy conservation devices, in terms of who is employed, the social impacts of that production, and even in terms of our ability to sustain the growth we seek.

Kinsley's liberalism is that of a utilitarian and a skeptic. We need benevolent government, he says, because it's a hard world out there, and will remain so, not because folks are so nice. Skepticism keeps one's feet on the ground. It protects against faddish enthusiasms and schemers of all kinds. It also provides great leverage for wit. But its limitations appear in pieces like "Waiting for Lenny," about Lenny Skutnick, the $14,000 a year federal employee who dived into the icy Potomac to save a woman who had been thrown from a plane crash.

Kinsley regards as "fatuous" the suggestion that this kind of spirit might be mobilized across the land to diminish the need for government welfare programs. This is a fairly standard liberal view. It's not that he's against voluntarism; it's just that he has a dim view of its prospects.

To be sure, Reaganites indulge a cynicism of their own when they talk as though voluntarism could reduce the federal government to the Pentagon and the CIA (with sugar and dairy subsidies thrown in on election years). But that doesn't discredit the idea of voluntarism itself. When people criticize liberals for thinking all benevolence must be routed through the Federal Triangle, it is exactly such attitudes they have in mind.

Or take "St. Ralph," Kinsley's backhanded defense of Ralph Nader (which concludes his section on "Influence Peddlers"). Nader comes off as a public pill with a neurotic aversion to material possessions, who is nevertheless to be praised because of seat belt laws and other life-saving enactments we owe to him. This utilitarian approach to Nader gets him exactly wrong, I think. More important than seat belt laws is the life example of the man who devoted his every energy to their enactment, who doesn't weigh his life activities upon the "rational man" calculus of personal loss and gain that haunts our economic models.

One can indeed appear fatuous advancing such views. That's especially the case in Washington, where people strive to avoid even the appearance of innocence. But equally fatuous is the notion that society can become collectively better without becoming individually so. (The political right strokes this chord expertly among the populace and liberals continue to concede the field.) Of course we need social programs. But bureaucratized well-doing ought to be minimized; and the individual kind won't flourish until opinion leaders encourage it.

Why do liberals generally feel uncomfortable with this idea? I do not think it is simply a desire for more jobs on the public payroll or pandering to constituency groups, as "public choice" cynics would hold. I think the idea of voluntary well-doing seems naive and even a little vulgar in some liberal circles; people don't go to the Kennedy School to learn to run PTA meetings. For all of us it also raises the uncomfortable question of how much we ourselves are doing.

Kinsley doesn't reveal much about himself, except in caricature. But when he talks about the ACLU's anti-creche crusade, there's a moment in which the cards are on the table and words carry genuine conviction.

"This child had better learn early on to question his identity with the American culture," he says of the supposed non-Christian beneficiary of the group's yuletide litigiousness, "because its a tough question that will follow him all his life no matter how successful the ACLU is at banning nativity scenes."

There are not many such moments however. And there are not many things that Kinsley really likes. Of the 63 essays collected here, I count only one on someone of whom Kinsley basically approves (leaving aside a partial defense of Yuppies). That's Nader. The only other such effort I can recall—though surely there are others—was the sketch that appeared in this magazine 16 years or so ago of an eccentric dentist named Ben Yellin in California's Imperial Valley, who waged a one-man crusade against water subsidies for big growers there. In both cases, Kinsley keeps a bemused and ironic distance. He's never really in with both feet.

Granted, piques are generally more entertaining than praise. And it must be said that Kinsley is wicked rather than mean.

Nevertheless, the put-down is only the first test of wit, and the easiest. The second, and more demanding, is the raise-up, the enlisting of wit in the service of advocacy and praise—of worthy causes overlooked, of individuals unjustly ignored or slighted. Sometimes simply the expression of admiration.

Journalism of this kind is risky in its own way. The guy you laud this week could go to jail the next, leaving you looking foolish. It is hard to pull off without appearing unsophisticated, fawning, or sappy. Which is why it requires the talents of our best. □

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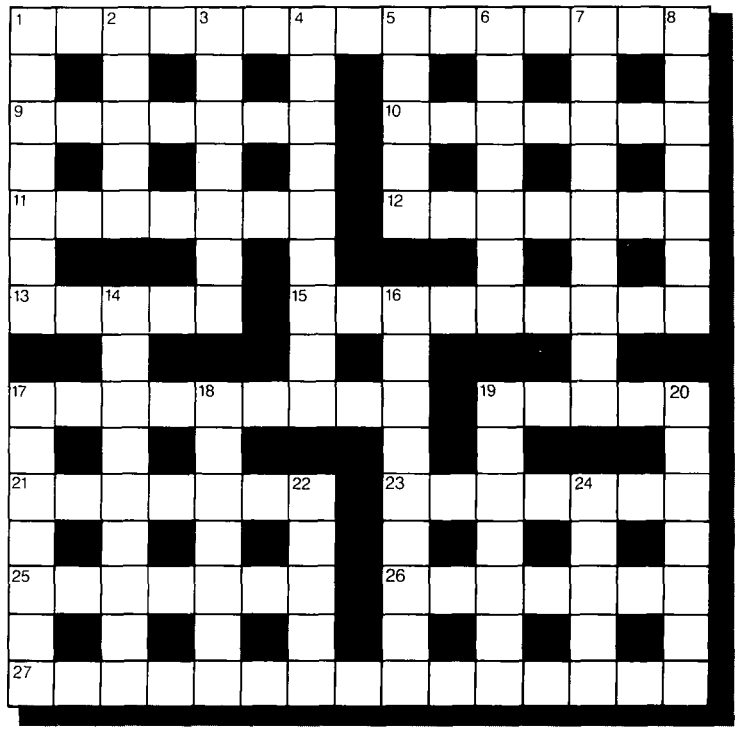
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



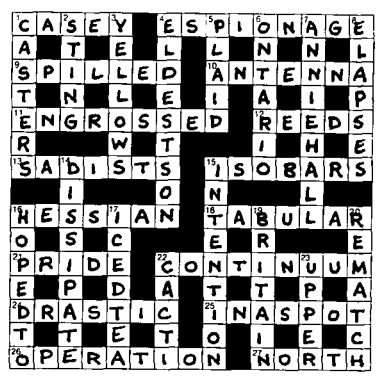
ACROSS

1. Goods Jean Weaver manufactured for market standard. (3,5,7)
9. A mess that is organized for twins. (7)
10. Flea flaw site. (2,1,4)
11. Set up sea duty time. (7)
12. Tense first hole putt soldier managed. (2,5)
13. Lions' likely failing? (5)
15. Appropriate mixture cited in ad. (9)
17. Studies rides arranged after studies. (9)
19. Deserve special timer. (5)
21. Awkward, if cruel, match. (7)
23. Carry mark of good wine? (7)
25. Form of redoing left out. (7)
26. Put out clumsy device around end of August. (7)
27. Economic event set period's anger in disarray. (5,10)

DOWN

1. Crazy saint poked a form of computer. (7)
2. Creature, and the law he made up. (5)
3. Delayed to try too much, we hear. (7)
4. Always meet re: ivy invention. (9)
5. Farewell in Islamabad, *i.e.*, unspoken. (5)
6. Flexible moving cleats around me. (7)
7. Sort of pear or pliers. (9)
8. Delete sloppily around 100 successful politicians. (7)
14. Naivete but not at all aurally. (9)
16. Unsorted paper aids vanish. (9)
17. White House first name before fish profession. (7)
18. One who while winning avoids tourist class? (2,5)
19. Profits from Southern arming trade. (7)
20. Trample or dent a mixture. (5,2)
22. Dirge composed for geologic feature. (5)
24. Confusing CIA, it should never come first. (3,2)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Last Chance For Our Children: How You Can Help Save Our Schools. Bill Honig. *Addison-Wesley, $8.95.* It's hard to argue with the academic movement that Bill Honig has championed since he was elected superintendent of California's public schools five years ago: more content, less coddling. This book was promoting higher standards for our kids two years ago when it was first released. Now as it's being reissued in paperback, books on "cultural literacy" top the bestseller lists. Those who smirk at "L.A. Law" and "Valley Girl" will feel vindicated to discover that California teens could once graduate from high school with credits in Bachelor Survival, Food for Singles, and Heroines of the Silent Screen. Honig quickly replaced this absurd array with required humanities and sciences, warning that our civilization—to say nothing of our democracy—would disintegrate unless our schools transmitted the fundamental ideas that underlie it.

But if we're really serious about tough standards, we'll have to require much more than Honig demands. For example, he asks that students take a year of world history "beginning with the rise of democracy in Greek city-states and the Roman Empire and continuing through the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Industrial Revolution." Whom are we kidding? Last year I taught a similar course in a public school system that required it. I had to cram so much into those vacation-laden nine months that "world history" began to sound like those cheesy mail-order albums you see advertised on late-night TV, with song titles flashing so rapidly down the screen ("Rock with the Romans"; "Boogie at Byzantium") that you can't remember any of them. The historical awareness Honig wishes to promote would require at least a two-year world history sequence. Ditto for U.S. history, which likewise receives a paltry single year in his reform package.

"Morality," meanwhile, figures largely in Honig's syllabus, too. As AIDS and teenage pregnancy continue to skyrocket, luminaries ranging from William Bennett ("Bill" in Honig's parlance) to Mario Cuomo have called on schools to expand their moral instruction. How? According to Honig, we must first disembowel the "values clarification" movement of the seventies, in which teachers ("values processors") helped students shape their own morals—and refrained from imposing a rigid ethical framework upon innocent, impressionable minds. Honig proposes an alternate approach based on the classic literary and historical works. A thorough examination of these works by an ethically exemplary teacher will give students the best morality training they can get.

Yes, but *whose* morality? The Great Books are great precisely because they address the same timeless moral questions—and arrive at radically different answers. "Our literature is hardly monolithic," Honig acknowledges; indeed, it "has a way of deflating ideologues and true believers of every stripe." Militarists should read Stephen Crane and pacifists should read Anne Frank, Honig writes, so both may be disarmed of their pretentions to moral superiority. Danger, Will Honig! You're straying alarmingly close to the values of clarification you so deride. Teetering on the precipice of ethical relativism, Honig gets vertigo and retreats to safer ground. Despite the range of viewpoints in these classics, he writes, teachers should not retreat from single-maxim instruction within "areas of broad public consensus" like—you guessed it—sexual relations. Eighty-four percent of Americans tell pollsters that they believe extramarital sex is wrong, Honig notes—"a pretty strong argument for treating sexual responsibility as a consensual value."

Actually, it's a pretty weak one. I don't know where Honig gets his numbers because his book isn't footnoted. But I do know that most of my students spend a lot less time

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in my classroom than they do in front of their televisions, where the vast majority of implied rolls in the hay lack the sanction of holy matrimony. And I also know of several literary classics, not all of them by D.H. Lawrence, that eloquently question the wisdom of strict monogomy. Shall we purge these works from our syllabi? Deride them? Ignore them? "In a democracy," Honig says, "the whole point is to nurture individuals so that...they begin to make up their own minds on matters of controversy." Let's do it, then, without pretending we have a moral consensus that we, in fact, lack.

And let's admit that the primary responsibility for moral instruction still rests with the family, despite its much-heralded dissolution. Honig is at his best when he discusses parenting and how school systems must work to improve it. I can't count the number of times I've heard parents complain that they "don't know what to do" with a lazy or inconsiderate child. Honig knows—and he's getting the word out, too. Using corporate donations, his system staged a statewide "Parents are Teachers Too" campaign, including parent education programs, TV spots showing parents instructing and praising their kids, and rallies where parents signed pledges promising to review their children's schoolwork, enforce bedtimes, and meet regularly with teachers.

Honig has also pressed for greater responsibility, opportunity, and respect for teachers. When he became superintendent in 1982, a starting toll collector at the Golden Gate Bridge was earning about $5,000 more per year than a starting teacher in the California public schools. Salaries have risen sharply throughout the nation since then, but status has hardly kept pace. Too many gifted people still believe the adviser at Brown who—in one of Honig's best anecdotes—tells a student, "You're too smart to go into teaching." The comment struck me as particularly poignant, because my mother has been telling me the same thing for about ten years. I'm glad Bill Honig is around to prove she's wrong.

—Jonathan Zimmerman

Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia. Robert Fishman. *Basic Books, $19.95.* Most people instinctively identify suburbs with one country (the United States), one means of transportation (the automobile), and one short time period (1945-1970). In this admirably brief and clearly written book, Robert Fishman convincingly argues that the suburbs originated in England, that they long predated the invention of the automobile, and that the supposed peak of American suburbia was actually more of a coda to the suburban age.

The original impetus for suburbs, Fishman says, was the desire of the Anglo-American upper middle class to emphasize the nuclear family as the basic social unit. This was a new idea in the late 1700s, when the urban home was also a place of business and a residence for apprentices. Although there is a dislike of city life implicit in the creation of suburbs, classic suburbs actually strengthen the city as an institution because their residents all go to the city for work, big-ticket shopping, and recreation.

Since World War II, however, the spread of innovations like the telephone and the beltway (and, Fishman might have added, the microcomputer) have made it possible for once-urban work places to move to the periphery of the cities; for all the hype you hear about gentrification, the real change of the last generation has been a reduction in suburb-to-city commuting because most people now work as well as live in the suburbs. The "fall of suburbia" of Fishman's subtitle has come about not because of an urban renaissance but because big cities are dying and most people no longer work in a downtown.

One of the most interesting questions about American life over the next half-century will be what these new non-urban places where people live and work—Fishman calls them "technoburbs," and other experts have coined their own ungainly names—turn out to be like. Will they breed conformity or individualism? A closer or more distant relationship between man and nature? More or less class stratification? Liberalism or conservatism? Will they cause culture to flourish or to die? Fishman doesn't claim to know the answers to these questions, but he sets them up very well. Urban studies tend (and have, as Fishman shows, always tended) to embrace voguish prejudices unthinkingly. Since the fifties, the prejudice has been toward a vibrant city life centered in stable neighborhoods; meanwhile the country has been moving in exactly the opposite direction. It's to Fishman's credit that, while he clearly feels the appeal of the current dream, he's intellectually honest enough not to claim that it's coming true, or that suburbs—even technoburbs—are necessarily barren.

—Nicholas Lemann

Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987. Bob Woodward. *Simon and Schuster, $21.95.* This book, which was expected to delight conspiracy theorists on the left, had a debut that delighted conspiracy theorists on the right. Poor, ailing Bill Casey was the victim of a scheming investigative reporter who slipped into his hospital room against his family's wishes.

A covert operation! Domestic to boot! *Was Ben Bradlee informed? Or did some cowboy assistant managing editor, secretly running a "back channel" book project from a townhouse in Georgetown, start an unauthorized investigation that could potentially topple the entire Graham administration?*

Anyone tempted to feel personal or professional sympathy for Casey will have changed his mind after finishing *Veil*. Someday historians will debate who did the most damage to the Reagan presidency: James Watt, Michael Deaver, Don Regan, Oliver North, and John Poindexter will all be candidates but Casey will ultimately be picked. Watt and Deaver merely made the president appear foolish. Regan and Casey pushed the country into

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foolish policy, a worse offense, and the net foolishness of Casey's actions exceeded that of Regan's, several of which were attempts to cover Casey's tracks. North, Poindexter, and others from the Iran scandal will ultimately land on the B list of Reagan rogues, as they were responding to a climate created by others, principally Regan and Casey.

Most of the sexy material from *Veil* is familiar to readers. How the inconclusive deathbed interview went from an event the *Post* wasn't even sure it should report to a mega-headline is a fascinating example of how you really can "make" news—especially if there is a dramatic personal confrontation to hang the headline on.

I found the book more rewarding for its little touches than its grand disclosures. At this point everybody knows that Bob Woodward is a superb reporter and a humdrum writer. But he's a much better thinker and analyst than he generally gets credit for. People have come to expect every page of Woodward's copy to be "shocking," so they often miss his subtle points. *Veil* reflects a sophisticated understanding of the way Washington institutions operate, the difference between big-deal B.S. and small but significant gestures. Consider this passage:

"About six weeks after the *Post* ran the story on the Nicaragua covert operation, I went to see [Barry] Goldwater [then chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence], hoping to find out whether the CIA had informed him fully about the operation. Senate officals are attended to as racing cars are by pit crews...[but] in Goldwater's office not a pencil was out of place. The only singular feature was the stack of ham radio equipment on a table behind his desk.

"'When Ben,' Goldwater said, referring to Bradlee, 'called me on the Central American thing, there weren't ten words out of his mouth and I knew he knew about the whole thing. So what I did was say, 'Ah, uh, uh, I don't recall anything about that. Why don't you call Bill

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Casey.' I played dumb with Ben.'"

"He had misled us but not lied. It seemed too subtle a distinction." Later in the section we learn that Goldwater actually wanted the facts of the operation out but didn't want to be blamed for leaking them.

What a marvelous vignette of institutional Washington: the pseudo-chummy contacts between players who would seem to be enemies; the little office details that tell you Goldwater is eccentric; the ritual blame-shifting; and, above all, the pretending not to know what's going on.

Even if you've already read the excerpts and reviews, seen the "Nightline" episodes, and bought the lunchboxes and the Woodward and Casey action figures (Realistic! Comes with its own shredder and five miniature documents!), *Veil* is still rewarding reading.

—*Gregg Easterbrook*

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If You Can't Say Something Nice. Calvin Trillin. *Ticknor Fields, $16.95.* Who buys collections of newspaper columns? It was not too long ago that a writer had to die before his collected journalism appeared between two hard covers; today, the genre seems to be catching up in sales to self-help manuals and diet books. (This is Trillin's third anthology, which ties him with George Will and Ellen Goodman—not bad for someone writing once a week.) Most collections are dreadful. Last year's punditry and wit yellows faster than newsprint, and these books must, like *Reader's Digest* condensed novels, wind up as wall covering in bathrooms and summer cottages.

That prefatory grumble aside, it has to be said that Calvin Trillin deserves a special exemption from the rule that one should be decrepit or deceased before republishing—the man is undeniably funny. If Mark Twain and S.J. Perelman could have married, Trillin might have been their issue. With his folksy deadpan, his carping, and his more-of-a-schlemiel-than-thou shtick, Trillin has backed his way to the front of the line of newspaper humorists. Only Russell Baker, who deploys his tricks, unbelievably, thrice weekly, merits comparison.

Baker probably has the broader repertoire of amusements, but Trillin has a lock on the one-liner crown. And nothing elicits his gift as much as the current administration. Michael Deaver "is so close to Ronald and Nancy Reagan that he is often described as being like a son to them—something that has never been said of their own children."

—*Daniel Benjamin*

Shattered Dreams. Charlotte Fedders, Laura Elliott. *Harper & Row, $17.95.* This sorry tale of wife abuse in the high reaches of the Reagan administration is written less for watchers of that administration and this city than for Everywoman.

Its straightforward prose seems aimed at women who may find themselves facing similar abuse and seeming helplessness; Charlotte Fedders, on her publicity tour, has been plugging the national hot lines and support networks for battered women. Sadly, her story makes her the ideal figure to call attention to the fact that, according to some figures, a woman is beaten every 18 seconds and four women are killed by a violent spouse every day.

John Fedders, chief of enforcement at the Securities and Exchange Commission until 1985, first hit Charlotte early in their 17-year marriage and continued to do so as the years went on and they had five children. When Charlotte insisted he move out, and she sued for divorce, he contested, refusing to settle. That was how the case got to court, where Charlotte testified to the beatings and *The Wall Street Journal* broke the story, forcing John to resign and effectively ending his career.

It seemed a just punishment to many. In the book, Charlotte traces her marriage to John Fedders at 22. She considered herself unattractive, believing self-worth would come only with a man and marriage, and could never quite believe she had landed this tall, attractive, ambitious lawyer. Viewing it as her fault if the marriage failed, she didn't leave him—though her father, a doctor, told her to—after John slapped her during an argument and broke her eardrum. Over the years, despite violence and psychological abuse which reduced her to insecurity and self-hatred, she stayed. It was only when the children began to grow up, and she saw the abuse starting to affect them the same way, that she found the courage to end the marriage. One of the more useful psychological insights she repeats is that it was only after she got out of the marriage, and away from the pressures, did she realize that it wasn't only her sons who deserved better but herself as well.

Everything in this tale is distressingly typical. Only John Fedders's prominence in Washington made it unusual—and this, correctly, is downplayed in *Shattered Dreams*, though the authors do try, rather unsuccessfully, to work up a secondary moral of Washington power-hunger and its effect on home life. True or not, this comes

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across as a bit of a red herring: the more compelling theme of the book for its intended audience will be the degree to which it can reinforce the sense that "it happens in the best of families," and also the worst.

The other singularity of *Shattered Dreams* is sociological: it may serve as a milestone in the book industry, the point at which the word "by" lost all meaning and came to function as just one more decoration on the cover. The names "Charlotte Fedders and Laura Elliott" on the book spine and the fact that Fedders is doing the book tour would seem to suggest that the book is ghosted. It isn't. Elliott, a writer for *Washingtonian* magazine, simply interviewed Fedders at length (obviously very great length) and wrote the book about her in the third person, supplementing it with other research and interviews. Nobody involved with the book or the contract seems to find anything in the least odd about this, so who is the reader to quibble?

—*Amy E. Schwartz*

Levine & Co. Douglas Frantz. *Henry Holt, $19.95.* He who writes first does not necessarily write best. Consider Douglas Frantz. The "Levine" in the title, in case you've forgotten, is Dennis Levine, the Wall Street investment banker who masterminded the insider-trading scandal that brought down the whole house of cards. It's odd: Levine's fall was such a big deal when he was first caught, and now the particulars of his case seem almost boring as so many bigger fish have followed, their own particulars vastly more lurid than his. And that was even before Black Monday, which has made the whole insider-trading scandal seem, somehow, far less interesting.

Frantz's goal was not so much to have the most complete book, or the most interesting book, or the best reported book on the scandal—only the first one. The question is: is that a goal that makes sense when a scandal is still breaking? *Levine & Co.* would suggest that the answer is no. What we get here is nearly 400 pages of Dennis Levine and his associates (surely you remember Ira Sokolow?)—and then, at the end, a few pages about Ivan Boesky and Martin Seigel, clearly pasted on as the book was being rushed to press. That's all he had time for.

Levine comes across as a creepy enough character, but neither he nor his compatriots are ever brought to life. Levine's lure, for instance, is still a mystery to me. Why were people willing to commit crimes for him when even they didn't like him very much? In addition, the book reads like a long newspaper story (Frantz works for the *Los Angeles Times*) and the reporting does not go much beyond what was published in newspapers as the scandal was breaking. Oh, well, at least it was first.

—*Joseph Nocera*

Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz. *Knopf, $24.95.* Who's to blame for our zombie youth? Nope, not conservative demons like rock-and-roll or "relativism" or casual sex. Not liberal scapegoats like Ronald Reagan, though his brand of politics is quickly filed away in the category "fraternities, anti-Semites, and conservatives." Here the usual suspect cultural phenomena go free.

In their place Horowitz gives us a strange and intractable enemy: "students in the past," who created "undergraduate subcultures" that still rule our campuses. First, there were College Men, who have long lived a life of fraternities and secret societies, rumbles, ritual alcoholism, cheating, and sports. Through their antics, fun-loving "clubmen" or "Greeks" institutionalized their hostility to authority. In the early 1800s, for example, students horsewhipped the president of the University of North Carolina and stoned two professors. Yale men bombed a residence hall in the 1820s and murdered a tutor who tried to intervene in the melee. Boola boola.

Then there are Outsiders, grimly hard-working students who view higher education as nothing more

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than an apprenticeship to professional life. Its progenitors were ministry students at sectarian institutions. Their successors: "townies," freed slaves, and women in the 19th century; GI Bill veterans and Asian-Americans in the 20th.

Finally, there are Rebels, a best-of-both-worlds alternative. They appeared just before World War I, children of wealthy German-Jewish merchants or certain WASP families that "sustained a quiet nonconformity." These were students barred by discrimination or their own lack of interest from the tumble of fraternities, and at the same time could not accommodate themselves to Outsider monasticism. So they fashioned a third force, a worldly style "as hedonistic as the College Man," but intellectually curious and scornful of frat-boy high jinks.

It is Horowitz's contention that the history of campus life is the story of these three subcultures struggling to capture the zeitgeist. Outsider theology students were the first champs, but frat-boys reigned undisputed through most of the 19th century. The first half of the 20th century was a Texas death-match between College Men and Outsiders, but both were overwhelmed by the stunning Rebel victory of the 1960s. Aided by the rebellion's excess and adult "repression" (i.e. Kent State), a new breed of Outsiders—the cold-sweat nightmare Horowitz shares with Allan Bloom—has since enjoyed a two-decade long winning streak.

What's wrong with this picture? To begin with, its categories seem little more than a taxonomy of Horowitz's prejudices. Kids involved in sports, fraternities, and student government, she sniffs, are mere lemmings "who feel they need a ready-made group life with a clear identity." The ruling party of New Outsiders ("the great unwashed") isn't much better in her book. Faced with mammoth tuition increases, these students "assumed their parents' cost-accounting perspective" and have the temerity to "demand of courses a return on the financial investment." Such grim careerism may once have been appropriate to certain social classes—"the Jewish grinds...would have felt at home"—but Horowitz has watched in recent years "as the nation's privileged children adopted it."

Of course there are the Rebels, Horowitz's favorites, who share her aristocratic disdain for most of their classmates. Listening to them laugh about the brown-nosing graspers, she is overcome with nostalgia for those "lively collegians of earlier days." Who, for example? Well, Margaret Mead, for one, and—no kidding—Walter Lippmann.

Model Rebels like these make clear the final snobbery of Horowitz's student classification system. Mead spent her years at Barnard apple-polishing Franz Boaz and writing love poems to Ruth Benedict. At Harvard, near William James and George Santayana, Lippmann set still-standing world records in sycophancy. What's the real difference between such Rebels and your run-of-the-mill Outsider today? Nothing so superficial as the Rebels' sex habits or "artistic dress," but rather the fact that they go on to become "America's premier writers and intellectuals." It's an exclusive club, and not much else.

—David Tell

History in Sherman Park: An American Family and the Reagan-Mondale Election. Jonathan Schell. *Knopf, $15.95.* After two pre-election visits in 1984 with a couple in the Sherman Park section of Milwaukee, Jonathan *Fate-of-the-Earth* Schell has found "History": one-time liberals are now too busy getting by to care about politics.

While offering thanks to the Public Agenda Foundation, Schell never says precisely how he wound up in Sherman Park. Whoever it was gave him a bum steer. He touts his hosts, Bill and Gina Gapolinsky, as if they were representative of a wider apathy in Sherman Park and across the country. (Gina on Watergate: "I have no memory of it. I was interested in interpersonal things.") But when I lived in Milwaukee, the neighborhood had long been a liberal hotbed, ever since Father James Groppi organized legions of civil rights activists there in the '60s. Hardly withdrawn, locals are still up on politics and committed to social causes. It's not Greenwich Village, but it's no backwater either.

When the Gapolinskys do say something illuminating about Reagan, Mondale, or their own feelings, Schell misses the point, even though he's had three years to mull over his notes. For instance, Bill emerges as a pragmatist. He wants a president who will accomplish *something*. While he is warm to the Democratic platform, Bill doubts Mondale could pull it off, so he votes for Reagan, a can-do guy. Schell interprets this as part of the much-heralded dealignment of American politics. Yet, Bill doesn't seem so much depoliticized as nonplussed about the current slate of candidates. Would Bill support a dynamic Democrat? Schell never asks.

Not listening is part of Schell's larger problem. He is so wrapped up in being with the *real people*, that he becomes obsessed with their customs for no good reason. He makes it a point to tell us that Bill's T-Shirt says "beer" and that his brother-in-law's furniture it "antique in style, but obviously newly made." At Bill's mom's house, there are fewer home-cooked meals, because now they're "being cooked commercially, by McDonald's or Burger King or Pizza Hut." And the streets aren't bustling like in New York "where in some places it is hard at lunch hour to keep your foothold on the sidewalk." His brief tour of Milwaukee does more to harm the city's good name than "Laverne and Shirley" ever could.

Schell didn't have to go all the way to Milwaukee to get a feel for what people are thinking. He could have taken the subway to Brooklyn and written the same book. Still, it's always amusing to see earnest writers venture into the midwestern wilderness, tape recorders and trail mix in hand. All things considered, though, I prefer Phil Donahue. At least he doesn't pretend to be writing history.

—Tony Byrne

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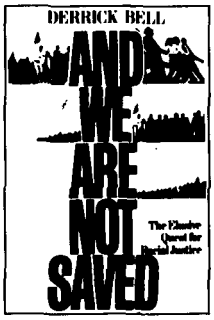

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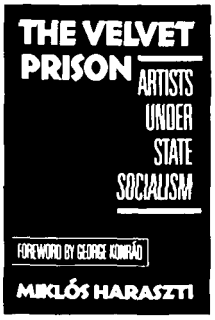

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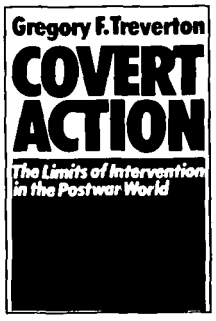

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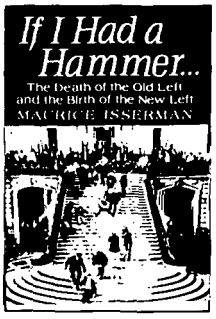

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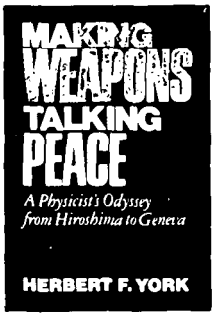

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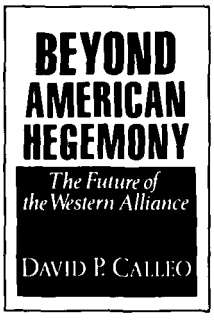

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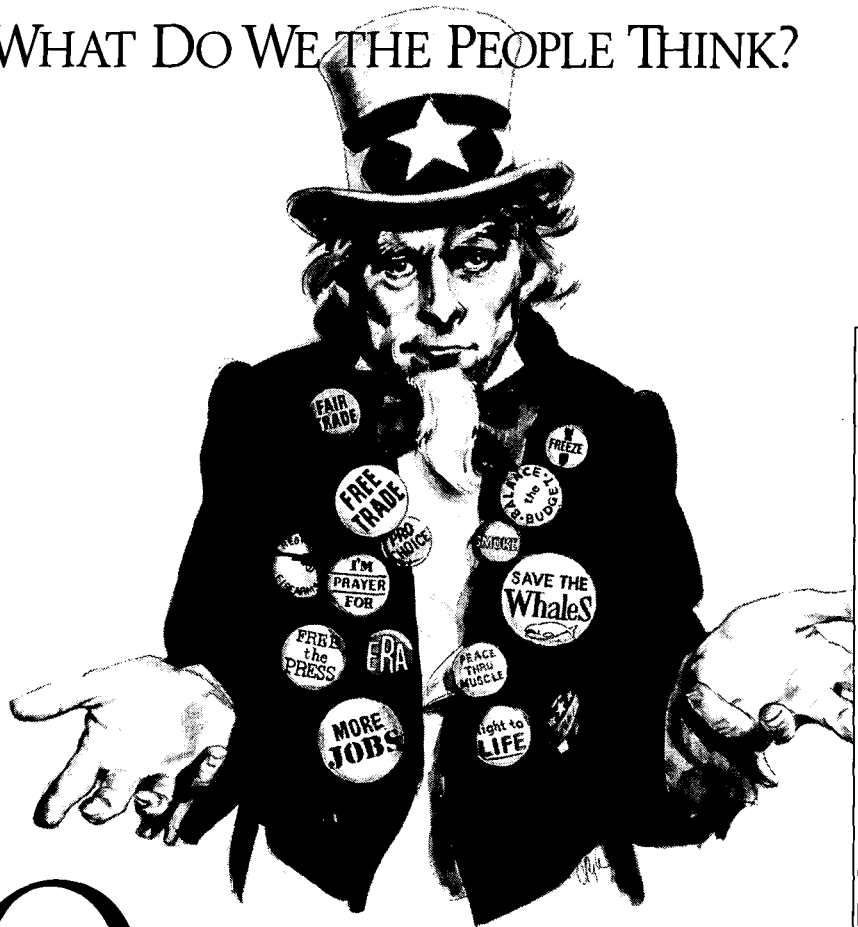

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